United Nations A/57/PV.59

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-seventh session

59th plenary meeting
Monday, 25 November 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 21 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/300)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/77, A/57/320, A/57/578)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/613)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/97, A/57/136, A/57/174, A/57/180, A/57/256, A/57/301, A/57/353, A/57/377)

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.33, A/57/L.41, A/57/L.42, A/57/L.43, A/57/L.46, A/57/L.47)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/130)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan, who in the course of the statement will introduce draft resolution A/57/L.42.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a tremendous honour for me to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.42, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". I am pleased to report that the list of delegations that have become sponsors of the draft resolution since after its publication now includes the following: Armenia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Egypt, France, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lithuania, Malta, Morocco, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and Ukraine. That makes a total of 45 sponsors.

For the seventh time, the General Assembly is considering the issue of providing international assistance for Tajikistan. This attests to the great interest of the international community in continuing to strengthen peace and stability in that country.

During this time, the United Nations has not only played an important role in the peace process but is successfully continuing to assist Tajikistan in post-conflict peace-building and sustainable development. Government efforts and United Nations assistance have been critical in meeting immediate emergency needs, mitigating the effects of the two-year drought, strengthening sustainable improvement in food security and improving access to primary health care and other basic social services. Continuing to provide

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international economic assistance to Tajikistan and international financing of humanitarian assistance are critical to assist in the development and to strengthen the achievements of the peace process. In this context, we are gratified to note the efforts of the Secretary-General to draft the regular Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal to provide humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 2003. This resolution in particular welcomes the continued role of the United Nations in post-conflict peace-building in Tajikistan and the efforts of the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building and expresses gratitude to all nations and international organizations for their positive response to Tajikistan's humanitarian needs. It calls for continuing to provide assistance and providing support to Tajikistan for rehabilitation and reconstruction of its economy in the post-conflict period. It welcomes sincerely the intention of the Secretary-General to continue the humanitarian programme of the United Nations in Tajikistan and urges Member States to fully and timely finance programmes that are covered by the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal in order to meet humanitarian needs of vulnerable segments of the population of Tajikistan in the process of moving the country forward toward peace-building and economic development. It calls upon the Secretary-General to continue to review all of the United Nations activities in the area of providing humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan in order to prepare a common humanitarian strategy, and also requests the Secretary-General to provide to the General-Assembly, at its fifty-ninth session, a report on progress made in implementation of this resolution.

In conclusion, let me express heartfelt gratitude to the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Mr. Hubert Worth, for his efforts in coordinating our work, and to all delegations, particularly to the representatives of the European Union, Russia, the United States and Canada, who took part in agreeing upon the text of the resolution and also to all delegations who were sponsors of it.

Mr. Laurin (Canada): Canada welcomes the opportunity to address the General Assembly on item 21, "Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian and disaster assistance".

Over the last several years, it has become almost routine for us to focus our item 21 statement on the numerous challenges facing the international humanitarian system. This is due in large part to the current environment in which humanitarian action takes place, which is complicated and rife with insecurity — for civilian populations and for the humanitarian staff seeking to protect their rights and meet their needs. Humanitarian access, physical and legal protection for civilian populations and addressing the causes of conflict remain the most pressing issues for war-affected populations. This is true in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Burundi, the Middle East, Colombia, and elsewhere. For natural disaster affected populations, often the victims of unforeseen events, the recent droughts in Southern and Eastern Africa have highlighted the extent to which structural factors, including poor policy decisions, can undermine the coping strategies of populations and increase vulnerability more generally, and in particular to HIV/AIDs.

There is no doubt that these dilemmas impact on the ability of Governments, United Nations agencies, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental actors to carry out effective humanitarian action and to ensure coordination. Our efforts to address these challenges must continue on a priority basis. Indeed, we cannot fail in seeking to respond to the most serious challenges to our common humanity.

While we recognize that there are numerous obstacles to coordination, not all of which are externally driven, we believe it opportune for the General Assembly to take a step back and consider a number of positive developments in the field of coordination over the last year.

First, focusing on Headquarters, we believe the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is coming into its own. The Action Plan developed by the Committee in response to the allegations of sexual violence and exploitation in the context of humanitarian crises was welcome and demonstrated a collective commitment to addressing this issue worldwide. We expect the Committee, under the continued leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to follow through on the Action Plan and enforce a policy of zero tolerance. Agencies delivering assistance must ensure they are accountable to both those they receive support from, as well as those they provide assistance to. We cannot afford to be complacent.

The working groups of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have also been busy in other spheres, including in the context of civil-military coordination.

Canada appreciated the opportunity to feed into the development of the Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in the context of complex emergencies. It was the first time the Committee really reached out to Member States in seeking their views on one of its policy documents. We would also encourage the Committee to consider the review of the Military and Civil Defence Unit completed in June, whose recommendations merit the group's careful consideration.

Canada is pleased with the participation to date of members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the formation and development of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Unit on Internal Displacement. Although it was established only a year ago, the Unit has, in our view, contributed to an improved United Nations response to the internally displaced — both at headquarters and in the field. Clearly considerable work remains to be done if we are to ensure that the protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced are integrated into United Nations country team efforts and are not forgotten. Nevertheless, we believe good strides have been made, and we expect United Nations agencies to continue to collaborate with the Unit, particularly through the secondment of staff, and to consider carefully the recommendations outlined in the recent interim review. Indeed, the collective commitment to the Unit, the application of the supplementary guidance by country teams, and follow-up to the recommendations made by the Unit and the Senior Network on Internally Displaced Persons remain important indicators for judging how far agencies have moved towards embracing coordination.

Looking beyond the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to collaboration between the humanitarian, military, political, human rights and development arms of the United Nations, we have begun to see some progress on the follow-up to the Brahimi Report and his emphasis on cross-fertilization and greater integration. The collaboration between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations in addressing protection concerns for refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one solid example, as was the striking example of the Integrated Management Task Force for Afghanistan, which facilitated the development of coherent United Nations approaches.

(*spoke in French*)

At the field level, we have also seen important examples of enhanced collaboration and joint action.

The inter-agency response to Afghanistan, while not without its setbacks, demonstrated the power of the United Nations system when it comes together with a common purpose. It was clear that lessons learned from previous crises, including in East Timor and Kosovo, influenced approaches to the international response in Afghanistan. This was evident in the appointment of regional focal points; the efforts to maintain operations throughout active hostilities; the establishment of civil-military coordination links and, the setting up of a humanitarian information centre. It was also central in the decision to bring together humanitarian and development actors to form a coherent and coordinated strategy, resulting in the document on the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People 2002. Canada is pleased with the genuine commitment to enhancing coordination among donors, the United Nations and the Afghan Administration in the latter's attempt to build stability.

In Angola, the rapid assessment of critical needs carried out by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations under OCHA's leadership was very impressive and successfully identified critical needs immediately following the ceasefire. Having mapped out areas where respective agencies or non-governmental organizations would take the lead, we are pleased to note that this collaboration has been carried through to the Consolidated Appeal and the identification of joint priority objectives.

In Colombia, we have seen a concerted effort by the United Nations country team, non-governmental organizations and the Government to develop an effective approach to protection concerns and, through the working group on protection, to make certain that the rights of displaced and other affected populations are addressed as part of the common humanitarian action plan.

Taken together, these efforts reflect the strides that are being made to improve coordination efforts, even in the most difficult of circumstances and on the most controversial issues. Canada is pleased by these developments. We note that they are in keeping with the original intentions of the Secretary-General's reform package initiated some five years ago, in particular his focus on enhancing the United Nations

humanitarian response system and on improving advocacy on humanitarian issues. While these accomplishments are the achievements of many, I would like to take this opportunity to express Canada's appreciation for the work of OCHA. OCHA serves an essential function in addressing the need for a focal point within the United Nations system for coordination in crisis management and for advocacy in support of civilian populations during crises. We urge OCHA to pursue its efforts to improve coordination within the humanitarian community and to strive for greater coherence among political, human rights and development actors.

In conclusion, I reiterate my Government's appreciation for the progress that has been achieved to date in improving the overall effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian action. Our efforts continue to be directed at ensuring more effective and efficient responses that place the needs of conflict — and disaster-affected populations at the centre. The humanitarian response system plays a concrete and high-profile role in meeting the demands placed on the United Nations today. Canada will continue to work diligently with members of the General Assembly and with other relevant actors to create the culture of protection called for by the Secretary-General and to develop the strategies necessary to improve the legal and physical protection and material assistance available to populations affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the delegation of Argentina wishes to express its highest appreciation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations agencies and other members of the humanitarian community for their work in the humanitarian field under the guidance of the principles established in resolution 46/182.

The delegation of Argentina wishes to indicate its satisfaction with the negotiated outcome reached at the humanitarian segment of the 2002 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the Council's central role in the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations.

At the same time, we would like to reiterate our concern about the dangerous safety and security conditions that humanitarian personnel continue to face in the field. The Government and people of Argentina strongly condemn the attacks against humanitarian personnel and wish to extend their condolences to the families and friends of those humanitarian workers who have paid the ultimate tribute of their lives when serving populations affected by humanitarian crisis.

In this regard, Argentina deplores the death on 22 November of Mr. Iain Hook, who had been working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Likewise, we are concerned by the fact that the ambulance that was summoned to assist Mr. Hook was refused immediate access. In addition to this grave incident, vehicles and staff of UNRWA have also been attacked on several occasions in recent months.

My delegation would like to express its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, contained in document A/57/300, which constitutes an excellent basis for the work of the General Assembly on this important issue.

We note with satisfaction the progress achieved in the implementation of initiatives for the 2002-2003 biennium in the field of the safety and security of staff. We are encouraged by the fact that fatalities among United Nations personnel appear to be decreasing as a result of enhanced training and security management, as well as through the implementation of such initiatives as the minimum operational security standards. In this context, we welcome the appointment of a full-time United Nations Security Coordinator at the Assistant Secretary-General level.

We cannot ignore, however, that much remains to be done to mitigate, reduce and manage threats and risks to United Nations personnel. A significant number of personnel employed by the organizations of the United Nations system remain in detention at various locations throughout the world and United Nations personnel continue to experience an unprecedented number of incidents of rape, sexual assault, armed robbery, attacks on humanitarian convoys and operations and harassment.

In order to continue to address these situations, the delegation of Argentina strongly endorses the suggestions presented by the Secretary-General in his report. In this respect, we call upon Member States to take stronger action to fulfil their responsibility to ensure that the perpetrators of attacks against United

Nations personnel are brought to justice; to ensure that any threat or act of violence committed against humanitarian personnel on their territory is fully investigated; and to take all appropriate measures, in accordance with international law and national legislation, to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are duly prosecuted. In this context, we wish to recall the inclusion of attacks intentionally directed against personnel involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter as a war crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. At the same time, we appeal to Member States that have implemented restrictions concerning communications equipment to be used by international humanitarian organizations to lift them immediately in the interest of the safety and security of staff.

We believe that the safety of United Nations and associated personnel engaged in United Nations peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations should continue to be an important element in the planning of such operations. In this respect, we call on the Secretary-General and on the host countries to continue to ensure the inclusion of key provisions of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel — inter alia, those relating to preventing attacks against mission staff, making such attacks crimes punishable by law, and ensuring the prosecution or extradition of offenders — in future or current status-of-forces, status-of-mission and host country agreements negotiated between the United Nations and such countries.

There is also a need for enhanced cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, within the context of their respective mandates, taking into account the humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions of many armed conflicts.

The delegation of Argentina would like to emphasize the importance of promoting the universality of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and, in that respect, it encourages all States to become parties to, and fully to respect their obligations under, that Convention. We also welcome the progress made in the work accomplished by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Scope of Legal Protection under the Convention and by the Sixth Committee, in order to give further consideration, inter alia, to the safety and security of locally recruited humanitarian personnel, who account for the majority of casualties.

We urge Member States and other parties involved in armed conflicts to ensure, in compliance with international humanitarian law, the security and protection of all humanitarian personnel and of United Nations and associated personnel.

Taking into account the fact that that ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel is an underlying duty of the Organization, we would like to emphasize the need to allocate adequate and predictable resources for that purpose, including through the necessary cost-sharing arrangements with the relevant agencies, funds and programmes within the United Nations system.

In addition to the role played by the Member States and by the United Nations system in recent years, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly been working in the field, in close cooperation with the agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system. The relationship between these various actors, often in crisis situations, has serious security implications, as the actions of one group may have an impact on the operational security of another.

In this respect, the delegation of Argentina welcomes the development of the set of guidelines for United Nations-NGO security collaboration, with a view to providing a framework for such relationships. Those non-binding guidelines, which provide for greater interaction, sharing of resources and training capacities, as well as promote common security standards and ground rules, are consistent with efforts to reinforce the security management system and with the commitment of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations firmly to establish security as an integral aspect of operations.

We therefore welcome the recent resolution adopted by the General Assembly requesting the Secretary-General to prepare model or standardized provisions for incorporation into the agreements concluded between the United Nations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations or agencies, and to make available to Member States the names of organizations or agencies that have concluded such agreements, for the purposes of clarifying the application of the Convention on Safety of United

Nations and Associated Personnel to persons deployed by those organizations or agencies.

It is an agreed principle that the primary responsibility for the protection of, and assistance to, peoples affected by humanitarian crises rests with Governments. At the same time, States are expected to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel, so that they can efficiently perform their task of assisting the affected civilian population, including refugees and internally displaced persons. In this respect, the efforts undertaken by humanitarian actors, or the arrangements negotiated by them, are secondary to the State's responsibility.

However, as we have indicated in the past when addressing the Assembly and other United Nations bodies, we believe that, in cases when States are unwilling or unable to meet their responsibilities, there can be no excuse for remaining indifferent to humanitarian needs. It is the responsibility of all to enable humanitarian assistance to reach and protect those who are vulnerable.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): I should like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the numerous issues that the General Assembly considers and acts upon under this agenda item. They send the clear-cut message that a significant part of humanity needs our unconditional attention and care. They also underscore the point that United Nations humanitarian assistance continues to be indispensable to people who are faced with natural disasters or other emergency situations.

The reports also note the ongoing efforts to ensure the effective and efficient coordination of work among all parts of the United Nations system related to disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. In this regard, I would like to commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations agencies in the field, as well as their partners, for a year of notable accomplishments. Their endeavours, jointly and individually, are particularly commendable against the backdrop of the economic difficulties and political uncertainties of post-11-September developments.

Natural disasters have continued unabated at the beginning of the new century. An analysis of these disasters shows that nature is less to blame than the accumulated effects of human activities, in the form of urbanization, indiscriminate development, environmental degradation and the resulting climatic changes. Thus, disaster response and recovery programmes must be drawn up and implemented on the basis of their close link to long-term planning for development. Meanwhile, the disaster-reduction principles advocated by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction should be incorporated into sustainable development planning.

Indeed, in all emergencies, natural or man-made, humanitarian assistance must proceed not as a distinct phase in and of itself, but as part of a continuum that includes relief, recovery and development, with the full participation of local communities every step of the way. Otherwise, the result is likely to be a dependency that perpetuates the emergency situation and a vulnerability to future disasters and crises.

In this regard, while noting Timor-Leste's continuing vulnerabilities and need for assistance, I am heartened by the progress being made in its transition from relief and rehabilitation to development. The assistance of the United Nations was instrumental in that transition. But the most important element was the courage and hope of the people of Timor-Leste and their leadership. In May this year, on the occasion of its birth as an independent State, they embarked upon the first national development plan. I wish them every success in implementing the plan, with the ongoing support of neighbouring countries and the United Nations.

Although conditions are very different in other countries that are struggling with humanitarian emergencies and crises, the international community would like to see the successful transition of those countries as well. To that end, it must continue to provide forward-looking assistance to the host Governments and other partners.

In war-torn and drought-stricken Afghanistan, which is still dealing with serious humanitarian difficulties, the international community is facing a unique challenge to its patience and its long-term commitment to humanitarian and development assistance. The United Nations must take the lead in rising to that challenge. The Republic of Korea is committed to doing its share in that process.

Humanitarian assistance begins with access to, and a needs assessment of, vulnerable populations. It is

equally crucial to monitor the situation so as to ensure that the assistance provided actually reaches them. Full cooperation at both ends of the process must be rendered by all the parties concerned.

Another increasingly important element is the safety and security of the humanitarian workers delivering the assistance. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, operational security has become an integral element of humanitarian intervention. In this regard, I welcome the steps that have been taken to strengthen security coordination and management for United Nations personnel. In particular, security training for all field-bound United Nations personnel and the development of minimum operating security standards at all duty stations, as well as guidelines on security collaboration between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, are steps in the right direction.

I would also like to join the call for Member States to strengthen their actions to end impunity for crimes committed against United Nations personnel. At the very least, their sacrifice on behalf of the most noble of causes for the benefit of the international community should be rewarded with honour and justice.

Mr. Lamba (Malawi): My delegation notes with satisfaction the important decision to include as agenda item 21 of the current regular session this topical issue of the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. It is also gratifying that this plenary debate comes barely five months after the high-level humanitarian segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, held in July this year, during which this important matter was accorded broad consideration. The Secretary General's reports in A/57/77, A/57/300, A/57/320, A/57/578, and a few others, provide very important information that is crucial to our appreciation of the magnitude of the humanitarian challenges.

I would like to believe that it is not a mere coincidence that both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council decided to consider this item during their respective sessions this year. Rather, it is my view that that represents a strong indication of the recognition by both organs of the compelling need for enhanced coordination of United Nations activities in the area of humanitarian assistance. The world body's increasing engagement and expanding role in this area also serves as a barometer of the fast-evolving scope and scale of natural disasters and other emergencies across the globe, particularly in Africa, and especially southern Africa and Malawi.

Malawi is in the grip of unprecedented famine. About 3.3 million Malawian lives are threatened; about 10 per cent of those people will starve if food aid is delayed or is inadequate. The famine crisis now affecting 14 million people in the Southern African Development Community region is exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which to date has infected 16 per cent of Malawi's population of 12 million, thus destroying the productive capacity of the country. Such disasters demand greater efficiency and more coherent responses and interventions, but the resources available and the human and institutional capacities are sufficient to cope with them.

Given the emergency nature and critical importance of timely humanitarian action to alleviate human suffering in times of disaster, the need for regular reviews, comprehensive evaluations and, indeed, coordination of the performance of humanitarian relief cannot be overemphasized. The proliferation of players and other stakeholders on the humanitarian playing field sometimes gives rise to the duplication of efforts and the misallocation of resources. The Secretary-General's report in A/57/77 aptly addresses the issue of coordination.

My delegation is very gratified by the growing interest demonstrated by the United Nations in improving and enhancing coordination of humanitarian assistance, as shown in the Secretary-General's report in A/57/77. The performance of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been extremely commendable, and must be underlined. In the past 11 years or so, the number, frequency and scale of civil wars, natural disasters and other emergencies has quadrupled. The massive movement of populations across international borders and the similarly disruptive phenomenon of internal displacement, as well as the wholesale human casualties caused by the devastation of such disasters and of military conflict have inevitably given rise to the need to explore constructive and ingenious ways of accessing, protecting and looking after the victims by taking a more effective, holistic and coordinated approach.

In many ways, the United Nations has successfully taken centre stage as the foremost provider of emergency relief and long-term assistance. Thanks to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 1991, for example, the United Nations has made wide-ranging concerted efforts to intensify improvements in humanitarian operations through the creation of multilevel, action-oriented operational bodies at Headquarters, as well as an elaborate and visible field-level coordination network under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Programme. Clearly, such a measure has had the positive effect of improving collaboration and consultations between the United Nations system and the Governments of the affected countries in the critical areas of disaster preparedness and forecasting of emergencies that defy the competencies and capacity of Governments and humanitarian actors.

The General Assembly's establishment of the consolidated appeals process for coordinated international interventions, which is a complement to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator's office for humanitarian emergencies, has created a formidable critical mass of technical expertise, capacity and resources from diverse sources to solidify the role and position of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as pivotal in United Nations humanitarian operations.

In order the for the United Nations consolidated appeals process to produce the desired results in the coordination of international humanitarian assistance, certain critical steps need to be taken. Among these is assistance to affected Member States in building local technical capacity for reliable weather forecasting, flood and contingency planning. Much of the meteorological equipment in most of the developing countries has been in use for decades and has, therefore, become obsolete, resulting in unreliable data and weather predictions.

Furthermore, the United Nations field disaster management teams might find it operationally expedient to co-opt the participation of State-run agencies charged with disaster preparedness and relief. This would make it easy to mobilize high-level political will for unimpeded distribution of emergency relief when this commodity becomes a national issue on the ground.

For the continued success of the consolidated inter-agency appeals mechanism, it might be useful for the international donor community to channel much of the humanitarian assistance through multilateral frameworks. This would assure transparency and close monitoring in disbursement of funds for the intended purposes. These are but only some of the possible measures that could create a positive incremental impact in the closing of ranks between United Nations relief agencies and the local actors, State and civil alike.

In conclusion, my delegation would also like to urge increased multilateral collective efforts against certain actions, including the illegal exploitation of resources and illicit trade in drugs and small arms, which fan conflicts. The negative effect of these illegal activities on the coordination of humanitarian assistance invariably tends to be wide-ranging, thereby stifling success in relieving human suffering and vulnerability.

Mr. Siv (United States): The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) estimates that more than three million people have lost their lives due to disasters, both human-caused and natural, over the last decade. By the end of the year 2000, there were approximately 14.5 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, and more than 20 million internally displaced, due to persecution or armed conflict. Today, Sudan and Angola have the largest number of internally displaced people in the world, followed by Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Secretary-General's report draws attention to the increasing combination of destructive forces of conflict and natural disaster. To that list, we would add a third force — misrule. Misrule multiplies the adverse effects of natural disasters. Six million people in Zimbabwe are suffering today because of that deadly combination. In other parts of the world, some Governments are engaged in regional or internal conflicts, spending precious money on weapons, while their people suffer from hunger and disease.

Not only are such Governments and non-State actors causing great harm to their citizens, but many of these same Governments are also hindering the access of relief workers. The United States condemns interference with humanitarian relief efforts. We endorse the Secretary-General's call in his report for

countries to remove those barriers and to facilitate humanitarian access.

It is important for the United Nations relief agencies to work together and to work efficiently. We applaud the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA. We support the consolidated appeals process and its attempts to unify and rationalize the requirements of so many organizations. With the assistance of scores of generous countries, United Nations agencies, together with hundreds of non-governmental organizations, are saving lives and reducing suffering around the world. But their efforts to alleviate the pain will never be enough on their own.

The Secretary-General's report this year builds on themes from previous years, showing that the conduct of Governments is critical in mitigating harm for the citizens of each country. It is the primary responsibility of every Government to provide for the safety and well-being of its people. This first requires the allocation of sufficient resources for basic infrastructure, especially water and health, but also education.

The international community is working hard to improve its ability to predict natural disasters and to reduce, through preventive measures, the damage that is done to people and property. The United States salutes the efforts of the United Nations agencies involved in this effort, by means of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The ISDR supports the establishment of national committees and the institution of common standards to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters. We also endorse the Secretary-General's calls for closer ties to non-United Nations entities working in disaster management and the need to bolster national and regional authorities.

Finally, the United States concurs with the Secretary-General on the need to follow emergency relief with a transition to development strategy. Strengthened by transparent and accountable systems on the part of the host country, the international community can accomplish much in this area, as evidenced by the relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. In addition, President Bush and Secretary Powell have stated the commitment of the United States to respond to the Palestinians' economic plight and to address humanitarian needs in the West Bank and Gaza. In the past year, the United States has refocused its assistance programme for the Palestinians on what is most urgently needed in the current crisis, without losing sight of longer-term infrastructure needs.

We have learned much over the past decade that now serves us in good stead in the work of alleviating human suffering in the wake of disaster. Let us continue to work together towards that end.

Mr. Sale (Liberia): The Liberian delegation is pleased to participate in the discussion on agenda item 21: "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent leadership and for the reform measures introduced by him over the years to enable the United Nations system to meet the growing demands in that vital area. We commend him also for his insightful report on assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia, contained in document A/57/301 of 12 August 2002. The report outlines the difficulties in the areas of security and political and socio-economic developments, and it highlights the Organization's collaborative activities in support of peace-building in Liberia. Similarly, our gratitude goes to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and to the Emergency Relief Coordinator for their invaluable role in those endeavours.

The tragic situation of Liberia has been well documented here and elsewhere. Quite recently, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, His Excellency Monie R. Captan, in his address to the Assembly on 20 September 2002, spoke passionately from this rostrum when he outlined the continuing suffering of the Liberian people and the challenges faced by a weary nation in the post-conflict peace-building era. He called upon the international community to support the Government and the people of Liberia in their relentless effort to rebuild the country.

In that connection, we wish to reiterate that call, and in so doing, wholeheartedly to agree with the Secretary-General, who said in his report mentioned earlier that Liberia was facing daunting problems in the areas of reconciliation, peace-building, reconstruction and recovery. He noted that the Government has not succeeded in generating the required financial resources domestically and internationally to revive the economy to its pre-war level. He cited the selective

sanctions imposed by the Security Council as one of the reasons for the severe decline in international assistance since May 2001.

Another major area of concern in the peace-building process in Liberia is maintaining internal peace and security. Since 1999, the Government, true to its constitutional obligation to defend its territorial boundaries, has been engaged in fighting externally-supported armed non-State actors who are determined to forcibly remove the democratically elected Government of Liberia. That conflict continues to create serious humanitarian crises, including of internally displaced persons and new Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries. Regrettably, that unfortunate situation has reversed any gains realized as a result of the installation of the democratically elected Government in 1997.

Experience has taught us that in a post-conflict era, delays in integration and reconstruction, as well as inadequate external support, usually undermine genuine efforts aimed at peace and recovery. For its part, the Government will continue to take concrete steps that will stimulate economic growth, such as fiscal prudence, public accountability and transparency. The five-year medium-term plan, which was prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is expected to consolidate peace and promote democratization, confidence-building measures and conflict prevention, both in Liberia and throughout the subregion. The Government is committed to the rule of law and welcomes the ongoing peace initiatives within the Mano River Union.

Health and education are also areas that have continued to be seriously affected because of inadequate external support. Notwithstanding this, we wish to thank UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and non-governmental organizations for their collaborative activities in those priority areas.

A draft resolution on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia is currently under consideration by the traditional sponsors and interested delegations. The draft resolution, when submitted, will, among other things, call upon the international community to respond to the humanitarian and development needs of Liberia, which hold serious implications for security and economic stability within the subregion.

We live in an interesting and complex world. Here I am, addressing the Assembly as an equal member of this great Organization and yet, the subject before us clearly delineates the differences between some of us, especially those of us who are supplicants. Fortunately, there is another important thread, and that is our common humanity.

Members of this Organization, irrespective of national standing, have, in time of peace or conflict, striven collectively to enhance those human qualities that uplift us as human beings, as opposed to those that degrade us. That is why for more than half a century the United Nations has remained the hope of mankind, struggling in most cases to defend the deprived and to build a brighter future for succeeding generations.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): United Nations humanitarian assistance activities are implemented by a number of agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme and so forth. If those activities are to produce effective and mutually reinforcing results, it is essential, in our view, that they are carried out in a coordinated manner. In that context, the Government of Japan is of the view that it is important that the Economic and Social Council at its humanitarian affairs segment and the General Assembly at its plenary session deal with humanitarian affairs in a more systematic way. We believe it is necessary to make it a rule, as far as humanitarian issues are concerned, that first they should be fully discussed in the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council and that the results should then be endorsed by the General Assembly. In that connection, the Government of Japan welcomes the consensus adoption of its resolution 2002/32, on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, as the outcome of the deliberation of the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council in July this year.

Now, let me touch upon four specific areas to which the Japanese Government attaches particular importance.

First, with regard to natural disasters, Japan often suffers from such severe natural disasters as earthquakes, typhoons and volcanic eruptions. Thus, as

both a donor country and a disaster-prone country, Japan has been a serious participant in and a promoter of various forums for the formulation of policies on issues related to natural disasters. A draft resolution on search and rescue operations is now under consideration. In addition, the Government of Japan hopes that the guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) will be continuously improved as a useful reference document for both donors and recipient countries and that they will become the international standard in that area. In that connection, we intend to participate actively in INSARAG activities as Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group meeting to be held next year in Kobe.

In 1995, the region surrounding the city of Kobe was hit by a very severe earthquake. The city was destroyed, and thousands of people lost their lives. Now, Kobe has become a focal point of efforts to combat natural disasters in the Asian region by hosting meetings and seminars in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, which is a network of experts on that subject in the region.

Secondly, one cannot fail to notice that, in almost all armed conflicts, the majority of the victims are civilians. According to OCHA, 10 civilians die for every soldier who is killed in such conflicts. Thus, the Government of Japan appreciates the initiative and the efforts that OCHA has undertaken in the area of protecting civilians in armed conflict. We believe that the relevant parties in various regions of the world need to be informed of the results of United Nations activities undertaken in that area. At the same time, OCHA should take into account the views of the relevant partners in those regions in conducting such activities. Moreover, the Government of Japan, together with other donors, supports OCHA in the convening of a series of regional workshops on this issue. Following the African regional workshop held in South Africa in October 2002, an Asian regional workshop was held in Kobe on 14 and 15 November. That workshop was very successful and productive, with broad participation by people from foreign service agencies, defence departments and non-governmental organizations. I understand that another workshop is to be held this month in the United Kingdom and that additional workshops are scheduled to take place in other regions next year. Moreover, the Security Council has been considering the subjects of women, peace and security and children and armed conflict. We believe it is important that Council take a comprehensive approach in dealing with those issues, which are related.

Thirdly, the Government of Japan welcomes the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), because it suggests a strategy that the international community should follow in dealing with humanitarian crises. Japan also expects that the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Secretary-General will play a catalytic role by, for example, launching timely appeals with regard to so-called forgotten crises. Having said that, I should like to express our concern about one aspect of the CAP: the situation in which only specific non-governmental organizations are allowed to participate in the CAP, without any clear explanation as to which criteria are used to invite them. We believe it important to have a full discussion among ourselves before we decide to invite certain non-governmental organizations to participate in the CAP, and to further discuss the criteria we use to invite them.

Fourthly, it is regrettable that, despite our tremendous efforts, the need for humanitarian emergency assistance has been on the increase. It is essential that humanitarian agencies, led by OCHA, define their strategies and priorities with a view to making the most effective and efficient use of our limited resources. Generally speaking, we are of the view that proactive prevention efforts, if successful, could be far more cost-effective than reactive emergency relief efforts. The Government of Japan intends to do its utmost to promote the culture of prevention that has been advocated by the Secretary-General.

Needless to say, my Government has been serious in its active support of OCHA. In addition to the financial assistance it has provided to OCHA thus far, the Government of Japan is prepared to provide approximately $2 million this year, and it is considering an additional grant to OCHA of more than $3 million in assistance through the Trust Fund for Human Security in order to address the problems of internally displaced persons and information management.

The difficulties that must be overcome by behind-the-scenes efforts to coordinate humanitarian assistance

are not well recognized. But such efforts play an indispensable role in promoting the smooth implementation of humanitarian assistance activities with the limited resources available. I should like to conclude by commending the efforts of all humanitarian personnel who are working tirelessly, risking their lives in the field to protect and assist people in need, as well as the Emergency Relief Coordinator and all the staff of OCHA, who are assisting the international community in reaching out to those people.

Mrs. Izata (Angola): I am taking the floor to thank all Member States that kindly support Angola and are sponsoring draft resolution A/57/L.41, on economic assistance for the economic rehabilitation of the country. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all the delegations that actively participated in the drafting process — namely, Denmark, on behalf of the European Union; the United States; Canada; Norway; Ireland; Japan; Portugal; and particularly our developing-country colleagues — Morocco, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Cape Verde, India and Swaziland — without whose participation we would not be considering this draft resolution for adoption today.

Unfortunately, we are submitting this draft resolution because the humanitarian situation in Angola remains very precarious. The Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on Angola (S/2002/834) considers the situation a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. While expressing our appreciation for the assistance provided thus far, we call on the international community and on the agencies of the United Nations to continue to support the projects foreseen in the mid-term review and to be especially generous in their support for the 2003 Appeal.

It is my wish that draft resolution A/57/L.41 be adopted by consensus.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now give the floor to the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Villettaz (International Committee of the Red Cross): At the launching of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) in Bern on 19 November last, our Director-General made the observation that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) remains firmly convinced that there is hope for the future.

However, it is unfortunate that the humanitarian situation has not registered any significant change for the better. In most conflicts prevailing today, civilians, in particular women and children, continue to bear the brunt of the suffering. Many are exposed to disease and starvation. Others are displaced from their lands and separated from their families. Many die. Children are kidnapped and forcibly recruited, their lives irremediably destroyed. When peace does not prevail, the only way to fundamentally change the situation would be to ensure constant and absolute respect for international humanitarian law in all conflicts. The ICRC tirelessly works towards that goal. It has called and continues to call upon States to spare no effort in abiding by their obligations in that regard under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I.

At the same time, the ICRC fully recognizes that the universal humanitarian effort can indeed be rendered more effective through increased and appropriate coordination. Coordination among humanitarian actors is inevitable, for the dimensions and complexity of humanitarian needs in most conflict situations could not possibly be dealt with by any single organization. For the ICRC, coordination signifies seeking the greatest possible complementarity with United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, within the framework of their respective mandates, operating principles and methods. Such coordination is principally motivated by the desire, shared with other humanitarian organizations, to harmonize efforts and avoid duplication, thereby utilizing the resources and expertise most appropriate for the people in need.

It is in that context that the ICRC, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, cooperates with the United Nations coordination mechanisms and structures, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As an IASC standing invitee, we participate in various meetings of that forum and its subsidiary bodies, sharing information and views on a host of thematic and operational issues. For instance, the ICRC contributed substantially to the preparation of the recent IASC publication entitled "Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights through

Humanitarian Action", which is a unique collection of practices to serve all humanitarian organizations working in the field. The ICRC also contributes, among other things, to OCHA's work concerning the elaboration of the common humanitarian action plans in various complex emergencies. Another instance of cooperation is that between the ICRC and OCHA's Internal Displacement Unit in Geneva in the preparation of the Unit's field missions.

In parallel, the ICRC maintains a regular bilateral dialogue with a number of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. For instance, its annual high-level meeting with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees this year dealt with the internally displaced persons issue, mainly in the context of Afghanistan. Another example of cooperation with the United Nations Secretariat is the training provided within the framework of courses for civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations offered by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to which the ICRC contributes the module on the special needs of women in conflict.

Mr. Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While on the subject of humanitarian coordination in crisis regions, the ICRC cannot but reiterate its firm position that humanitarian action must be kept distinct from political and military action. Their aims are fundamentally different: the primary goal of military operations should be to establish and maintain peace and security in order to help advance or sustain a political settlement of a conflict. While such settlements are key to ultimately ending suffering engendered by conflicts, it is crucial that, in the meanwhile, humanitarian actors be able to independently assist and protect the victims. Consequently, in its relations with the various armed forces, the Committee always strives to promote a better understanding of and respect for each other's respective role, constraints and working methods. In this context, the ICRC is concerned by what it perceives as a developing tendency, in particular at the level of policy framework elaboration, to increase military involvement in humanitarian operations. It wishes to stress the absolute need to avoid any blurring of roles that might result from a militarization of humanitarian assistance. This can seriously undermine perceptions of the latter's neutrality, with the attendant consequences for the security of humanitarian workers.

In that context, coordination also signifies concerted efforts to safeguard the very independence and strictly humanitarian nature of humanitarian operations. Such efforts are necessary to maintain a working environment in which humanitarian organizations can safely discharge their mandate.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. de Sclabos (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the opportunity for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to share its views on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

The decade since the adoption of resolution 46/182 has seen steady development of the instruments and mechanisms that we, the humanitarian agencies both within and outside the United Nations, need in order to achieve more coherent approaches that better respond to the needs and interests of our beneficiaries, as well as of our supporters. People who are vulnerable to, and victims of, natural disasters and other emergencies are ordinary people with the same rights and obligations as everyone else, including the right to dignity.

The IFRC is a network that can contribute a great deal to Governments and humanitarian organizations with respect to their responsibilities towards beneficiaries. One of the main principal tasks of the Governing Board of the IFRC, of which I have the honour of being a member, is to develop the capacity of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to carry out their responsibilities fully and respectfully, within the context of debates within their respective countries and in United Nations agencies.

That is the context for the participation of the IFRC in several important initiatives since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Those initiatives include the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in disaster relief; the Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response; the Better

Programming Initiative, born of the conviction that in communities affected by violence, well planned aid programming with alternative and creative implementation options can support local capacities for recovery and reconciliation.

A consequence of those initiatives is the Humanitarian Accountability Project, an inter-agency initiative which explores the need for a self-regulatory mechanism for all humanitarian operations to ensure accountability to the communities and individuals affected by wars and disasters.

It is from that basis that the International Federation began to examine the framework of international law in the field of international disaster response. The International Federation's delegation has spoken in some detail on this subject in relevant debates during this session of the General Assembly, and I will not now repeat the points we have made. But progress on the work will be brought to the attention of United Nations family bodies on a regular basis, with a view to ensuring that all States and all national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are well briefed when they receive a report with recommendations to be acted upon at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to take place in Geneva in December 2003.

Our own endeavours to stress the importance of emergency intervention units, evaluation and coordination teams on the ground and a reserve fund for disaster relief will be reflected in programmes based on the principles for intervention to which I referred earlier.

One lesson we have learned in the past is that no single agency or organization can or should try to do this alone. This is why the International Federation has significantly increased its focus on building alliances and partnerships with other organizations. Sometimes, for example, when required by a particular situation, such as the tragic situation now confronting Southern Africa, we have built a specific partnership, in that case with the World Food Programme. At other times, partnerships have been strategically designed, as with the United Nations Environmental Programme or the Pan American Health Organization.

We have also established the International Federation's Pan-American Disaster Response Unit in Panama. The Federation intends to broaden its own international representation at the regional United Nations level, and arrangements are now being considered to develop cooperation with all United Nations regional economic and social commissions. As an example of what this could entail, my own national Red Cross society, the Chilean Red Cross, will assist the International Federation in maintaining its relationship as an international organization with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago.

Similarly, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in small island developing States will have a leading role in the development of IFRC positions for the forthcoming conference to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The International Federation is pleased to be associated with the ProVention Consortium, a group originally created and hosted by the World Bank, but whose secretariat is now housed at IFRC headquarters in Geneva. This is the kind of global coalition which can really bring strength of purpose and action to disaster preparedness and response. It includes Governments, international organizations, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations aimed at reducing disaster impact in developing countries.

The increasing number of actors in emergency assistance and disaster relief underlines the need for coordination and recalls the central role of the public authorities of the country affected. That is why the International Federation continues to call for the establishment of national disaster plans and national coordination mechanisms. As national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies, and as an international organization, we will continue to contribute to the attainment of these goals.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to the Observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Paiva (International Organization for Migration): A decade ago, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was privileged to be one of the three non-United Nations organizations specifically invited to participate in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Since then, the

humanitarian community of which we are a part has grappled with emergencies of sometimes daunting complexity and scales of displacement and human suffering seldom seen or even imagined before.

And just as civilian suffering in complex emergencies has increased, so have the threats to humanitarian aid workers. IOM, which has a formal agreement with the United Nations to participate in the United Nations security management system, is deeply concerned about this trend. We continue to take steps to reinforce our own internal capacity to deal with staff security, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator. As is the case with our United Nations partners in the shared security structures, however, we are struggling to find the additional resources required to upgrade security preparedness, in particular when these are core costs but are not covered by assessed contributions.

In the face of such challenges, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his dedicated staff in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have played a critical role in forging closer collaboration. In IOM's view, the IASC mechanism has contributed directly to marked improvements in information-sharing and coordination among involved international agencies in every phase of humanitarian crises, from contingency planning to operations to drawing lessons learned. We value our participation in the IASC, and we are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Oshima for his committed and inclusive stewardship of it.

For IOM, being part of the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeals process, whose global launch for 2003 took place last week, is a key element of our IASC involvement. Compared to when this process was started, or even compared to last year, the current appeal shows rather striking progress in presenting a more comprehensive and strategic picture of both the needs in a given situation and participating agencies' coordinated plans for dealing with that situation.

Getting to where we are today has taken a lot of effort on the part of all concerned, beginning with OCHA as the coordinator. Indeed, at times, smaller operational agencies such as IOM have found the process quite taxing. Nevertheless, like other IASC partners, we have persevered in recognition of the advantages of such an approach, not only because donors have stressed it but also because it helps us to crystallize our own role and priorities in a given complex emergency. Indeed, we recognize the Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal as a strategic planning and programming process, not just a resource mobilization tool. In all honesty, then, it sometimes puzzles us to see that the pattern of response does not necessarily reflect the real improvements in the process and the end product, nor necessarily the most pressing needs.

Finally, the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement within OCHA is a further example of how coordinated action which combines the strengths of a range of agencies can create stronger response mechanisms. IOM welcomed OCHA's initiative in creating the Unit, as well as the open manner in which OCHA elicited participation from all IASC members. We believe that this is an important inter-agency effort in a field of great complexity, and one that merits the strong support of Member States. For our part, we are pleased to have seconded an experienced IOM staff member to the Unit in response to the Emergency Relief Coordinator's request.

If IOM attaches considerable importance to its participation in IASC processes, it is because we continue to see practical improvements in emergency response capabilities that have come about because IASC exists.

While there is no doubt that the humanitarian community can do better still, it is encouraging that effective mechanisms are in place which have proved their value in helping the IASC partners to achieve better-coordinated, proactive responses to humanitarian emergencies. IOM takes the opportunity today to reaffirm its commitment to that partnership.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 21 and its sub-items (a) to (c).

The General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolutions A/57/L.33, A/57/L.41, A/57/L.42, A/57/L.46 and A/57/L.47.

Draft resolution A/57/L.33 is entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries

have become its co-sponsors: Algeria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Morocco, Republic of Korea, Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.33?

Draft resolution A/57/L.33 was adopted (resolution 57/101).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.41 is entitled "International assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Belgium, China, Cyprus, Eritrea, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Ireland, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.41?

Draft resolution A/57/L.41 was adopted (resolution 57/102).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.42 is entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.42?

Draft resolution A/57/L.42 was adopted (resolution 57/103).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.46 is entitled "Assistance to Mozambique". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Eritrea, France, Guinea, Jamaica, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Spain, the Sudan and Togo.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.46?

Draft resolution A/57/L.46 was adopted (resolution 57/104).

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/57/L.47 is entitled "Assistance for humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and development for Timor-Leste". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft, the following countries have become its co-sponsors: Belize, Croatia, Eritrea, Guinea, Israel, Malaysia, Philippines, Samoa and Slovakia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.47?

Draft resolution A/57/L.47 was adopted (resolution 57/105).

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/57/L.43 will be taken at a later date.

I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I would like to begin by expressing Israel's profound sorrow over the death of Mr. Ian Hook, who was killed in an exchange of gunfire between Israeli forces and Palestinian gunmen in Jenin on Friday. Israel also extends its sincerest condolences to his family. Mr. Hook, Project Manager of the Jenin Camp Rehabilitation Project of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, was a dedicated humanitarian whose work for others was unselfish and admirable. Israel is continuing to conduct a thorough investigation of the events that led to his death.

Israel supports efforts made by the donor and international community to alleviate the hardships of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is sensitive to the humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian population and views the addressing of these needs to be a fundamental Israeli interest.

In today's debate, the Palestinian Observer referred extensively to the deteriorating economic and humanitarian condition of the Palestinians, blaming Israel's security measures for this situation. While the increasing hardship of the Palestinians is a sad truth, the presentation of Israel's actions as the cause of this

suffering is disingenuous. It is like beginning a story in the middle.

Following the signing of the 1993 Oslo accords, Israel made substantial efforts to facilitate Palestinian-Israeli economic cooperation in the context of the peace process. As a result, there had been a marked expansion of Palestinian trade and employment in Israel as well as other forms of economic cooperation from 1994 until the outbreak of the present violence.

Israel, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, had taken a broad range of actions since 1994 in order to promote and improve the free movement of goods and labour from the Palestinian Authority areas into Israel. In addition, industrial parks have been set up in the Palestinian Authority involving substantial Israeli investment and economic incentives. These measures have had a significant positive impact on the Palestinian economy.

However, the Palestinian leadership's decision, following the Camp David summit of July 2000, to employ violence as a political tool, sabotaged Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation and left Israel with no choice but to implement essential security measures in order to defend itself against Palestinian terrorism. The acute security threat presented by Palestinian terrorism makes these measures unavoidable if Israel is to fulfil its duty as a sovereign State to safeguard the lives of its citizens. It must be stressed that the purpose of the security precautions is not to unduly burden the Palestinian population but rather to ensure the security of Israeli citizens facing daily threats to their lives.

The donor community recognizes Israel's legitimate concerns, as duly noted in the Secretary-General's report in document A/57/130. The challenge that Israel faces is to do its utmost to protect its citizens while doing as much as it can to minimize the impact of tightened security on the Palestinian population. This is not an easy job, and Israel has taken upon itself calculated risks in order to try to close the gap between security and humanitarian needs. It is therefore Israel's policy to differentiate as much as possible between those perpetrating, aiding and directing terrorist activities and the civilian population which is not involved in terrorism. If calm prevails in particular areas, improvements can be implemented there, independently of other areas.

Unfortunately, terrorists have used every Israeli attempt to ease restrictions on Palestinian daily life as an opportunity to renew their attacks on Israeli citizens. For example, they have taken advantage of the eased freedom of movement to infiltrate Israeli cities and carry out attacks, and have exploited expedited passage for ambulances to smuggle fugitives and even suicide bombs. A case in point is the attack on an Israeli naval vessel which took place on Saturday off the coast of Gaza. Following an easing of security measures regarding fishing vessels, the Gaza fishing zone was extended out to 12 miles. The terrorists exploited this improvement in order to attempt to dispatch suicide bombers by sea. The boat was intercepted and the terrorists detonated themselves, wounding four Israeli sailors. Needless to say, following that attempted infiltration, Israel was forced to re-apply security restrictions to the Gaza coast.

This shows that the impact of the events on the local civilian population is due, more than to any other factor, to the abuse of the population by the terrorists themselves. This terrorism hurts Israelis and Palestinians alike, and an end to the situation is dependent upon an end to violence and terrorism. Consequently, the Palestinian claim, made here today, that the economic and humanitarian plight of the Palestinians is due to Israeli security measures, ignores the connection between cause and effect. If there were no terrorism, there would be no need for tightened security, with the negative economic and humanitarian effects that it engenders. If the concern of the Palestinian observer for the population in the territories is sincere, she should be confronting the terrorist organizations operating within the Palestinian Authority so as to stop their violence, rather than blaming Israel for having to protect itself.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): Once again we have heard a statement by the Israeli representative that was full of lies and distortion. I will not at this point go into detail about the content of that statement. I want to make just three comments. The Israeli representative endeavoured to accuse our leadership of taking a decision to use violence in the occupied territories. In spite of the Israeli delegation's attempt to distort the facts, the real cause of violence and of the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is Israel's continued military occupation and its escalation of the military campaign against the Palestinian people. That is a fact.

The occupation is the main cause of the deterioration of the situation in the occupied territory.

That is not the claim of my delegation or the Palestinian Authority. I would like the Israeli representative to go and read all the documents and reports from the Secretary-General's envoy and the Special Coordinator relating to the occupied territories. They all indicate that the main cause of the hardship and the deterioration in the economic situation is the Israeli military action.

The Israeli forces have resorted to committing the most heinous war crimes in modern history. Those crimes, which include State terrorism, are committed under the banner of "security". Using excessive force, they have demolished many houses, restricted movement and closed the occupied territory. All of those actions have had a devastating impact on our economic situation.

On the issue of terrorism, it is shameful for the representative of a Government that throughout its history has committed the most heinous crimes and acts of terrorism to talk about terrorism.

The Palestinian Authority has condemned all forms and manifestations of terrorism, by whoever commits them and whether they are against Palestinian civilians or Israeli civilians. But we should not confuse the issue. There must be a difference between terrorism, which is a heinous crime that we condemn officially and in all our statements, and the right of people who live under oppression and foreign occupation to defend themselves and to resist occupation. That right comes not from us, the Palestinian Authority. That right comes from the international community and from international law, which legitimizes the use of any means to resist occupation and oppression.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): In my first reply I addressed most of the issues subsequently raised by the Palestinian observer in her reply. However, since by replying the Palestinian observer has given me an opportunity to speak before the Assembly for five more minutes, I wish to elaborate on one particular issue that was raised in the statement made from the rostrum today, and that is the death and injury of Palestinian children in the violence. A few hours ago, an 8-year-old boy, Jihad al-Faqih, was killed in Nablus while trying to hurl two pipe bombs at Israeli soldiers. That abhorrent use — exploitation — of children in armed conflict is not unique. From the earliest days of the renewed violence, the Palestinian Authority, aware of the propaganda value to be gained, has actively promoted the participation of children in the anti-Israeli violence. Its schools, summer camps, mosques and official media have engaged in incitement specifically directed at young audiences. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority has trained children in the use of weapons and has created an atmosphere that extols death in battle and encourages children to become suicide bombers. The cynical use of children as pawns in the conflict begins in the Palestinian educational system. Instead of educating children about peace, as Israel does, Palestinian textbooks, many of which have been recently published by the Palestinian Authority itself, openly teach hatred of Israel and Israelis. Materials published and broadcast in the official Palestinian media reinforce these lessons, aiming much of their incitement at children, encouraging them to hate Israelis and to take part in the violence. Children are urged by television advertisements to "drop your toys and take up arms", while Palestinian educational television programming glorifies martyrdom in the struggle against Israel.

Youth groups and official Palestinian Authority summer camps teach children to be holy warriors in the jihad against Israel and the Jews, actually training young people in the use of firearms. Educational facilities are used to inspire hero worship of suicide bombers, psychologically preparing Palestinian children to follow in their footsteps.

With the passage of time, as the Palestinian Authority intensified its incitement and expanded its use of children in the violence, young Palestinian boys and girls were increasingly exploited to be used as suicide bombers. The age of suicide bombers is dropping by the day, and attacks carried out by teenagers have become the norm. In addition, younger children, some no more than toddlers, have been used to provide cover for the transportation of weapons and explosives.

The Palestinian Authority's manipulation of children, which has been extensively documented in the media, constitutes a reprehensible violation of every international treaty and convention meant to protect children in situations of armed conflict. The Palestinian Authority's heinous exploitation of children is both profoundly immoral and fundamentally illegal.

It should also be remembered that hundreds of Israeli children have been killed or wounded in terrorist

attacks. These were not just incidental victims of the violence, but the intended targets of terrorists. They have been deliberately targeted and killed by Palestinian sniper fire and in drive-by machine gun ambushes. Palestinian roadside bombs have maimed children in school buses, and Israeli youngsters were bludgeoned and stoned to death by terrorists while hiking near their homes. Suicide bombers have murdered dozens of Israeli young people, choosing to strike at places where young people are known to congregate: discos, bus stops, fast food restaurants, shopping malls.

Although the suffering of every child is tragic and regrettable, a basic difference exists between the two sides. Most Palestinian children have been hurt due to their direct participation in violent confrontations, while a minority of casualties were the unfortunate result of crossfire or return fire directed towards terrorist targets. By contrast, Israeli child victims were deliberately targeted by their terrorist attackers as the intended and preferred victims of the Palestinian bombers, snipers and gunmen.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): I am sorry to take the floor again, but the statement by the Israeli delegation has compelled me to make a few remarks. This latest statement is, at the very least, a racist remark. It is not only racist, but it is also inaccurate and full of lies.

My delegation regrets the death or injury of any child, let alone Israeli children. We regret the loss of any child, wherever they may be. We condemn their killing, by whoever it may be.

I just want to remind the Israeli delegation that 2,000 Palestinians have been killed since September 2000. One third of them were children. We are talking about 500 Palestinian children. And, according to the statistics, most of those children died either at home or at school. Only a few died where violence was taking place. I repeat: most of them died either at home, in the streets or in the schoolyard.

In addition, we have more than 35,000 injured. Again, one third of them are children. We are talking about 10,000 injured Palestinian children; many of them have permanent injuries, and they cannot resume their normal lives. And the Israeli delegate dared to talk about children and the love of children?

My second point is that the Palestinian Authority does not exploit children. It does not educate children to hate. Our children can see before their very eyes the destruction, the demolition of houses above their heads. They watch their parents being killed. They see the siege of the occupied territories. This is how the Palestinian children learn to resist occupation. For 35 years under occupation, they have not lived a normal life for a single day. And now he is talking about violence, hatred and educating children? For 35 years those children did not see any kind of normal life. They have not enjoyed a single right that is stipulated in the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Israel has violated every right that the Palestinian children have. They ought not to dare to talk about their care for their children. We love our children as much as anybody else. We love life as much as anybody else. But it is only through the end of occupation and the end of oppression that Palestinian and Israeli children can live in peace and security.

The Acting President: I remind members that action on draft resolution A/57/L.43 will be taken at a later date.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.60

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

60th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 98

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family: outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its follow-up

Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/352)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.8)

The President: The General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 56/38 of 5 December 2001 and decision 56/473 of 27 June 2002, will consider the outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its follow-up, under agenda item 98.

Today the General Assembly will engage in a discussion on volunteerism and reflect on the International Year of Volunteers. Volunteerism has an important place in our society. Local volunteer involvement is an invaluable and indispensable contribution to the betterment of social conditions, the promotion of economic development and empowering people to take charge. It spans a broad array of areas, ranging from supporting democratization and peace-building initiatives, electoral assistance, verifying human rights, humanitarian age education, gender-mainstreaming, health care and sustaining the environment, to name just a few.

Volunteerism reinforces a sense of collective responsibility, makes a tangible difference in the lives of many and brings self-fulfilment to the individual volunteer. The potential of volunteerism to contribute significantly to the attainment of the Millennium Goals cannot be overestimated.

The International Year of Volunteers was a milestone in recognizing the tireless work of volunteers around the world. It generated and mobilized public awareness. It helped to connect volunteers of various parts of the world, and, most important, it created a motivating environment conducive to volunteer action. Clearly, many more Governments now see volunteerism as a valuable asset that needs to be strategically factored into development policies and programmes.

The International Year of Volunteers was launched with a view to achieving four main objectives: recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteering. Accomplishments in all of those areas have been remarkable. The recognition of volunteerism was advanced by a number of research studies that were conducted globally and nationally through international support and cooperation. The role and the contribution of volunteerism in human development have been recognized by the highest authorities in most countries. Several concrete actions have been taken by them to incorporate those factors into their development strategies. The United Nations Volunteers programme, which was established more than 30 years ago, and its Volunteers have set a noble

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example through their services in various capacities around the world. The United Nations system, with its specialized agencies and programmes, is committed to increased involvement to promote volunteerism.

A very important achievement of the International Year of Volunteers was the facilitation of volunteering through a number of measures. One of the principal areas was the enactment of new legislation or the strengthening of existing legislation, which will make volunteer action in many countries far easier. Also important in that respect were consultations on policy options and the creation of new volunteer support mechanisms and infrastructure, such as volunteer centres, volunteer corps, national commissions as advisory bodies and national forums.

Another achievement of the International Year of Volunteers was the involvement of non-traditional actors, such as the private sector. In addition, it engaged persons who might otherwise be associated with receiving volunteer help, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS and refugees. Their involvement and empowerment are of special significance.

The International Year of Volunteers also helped to build networks of volunteers, thereby giving volunteers in individual countries a sense of inter-connective support and mutuality. It provided opportunities for a number of meetings, organizing workshops and training courses to share and exchange information and best practices.

The media, including radio stations, television programmes and newspapers, were harnessed in the promotion of volunteerism. Promotional events and tools, such as booklets, posters and commemorative postage stamps were employed.

The International Year of Volunteers has put volunteering on a more solid basis for the years to come. But a great deal still needs to be done if volunteerism is to fulfil its potential. General Assembly resolution 56/38 of last year provided some invaluable pointers in that respect. Governments should continue to support and develop the volunteerism infrastructure and technical cooperation. International organizations, civil society and the private sector should also continue to support the volunteer movement. The unique relationship between volunteerism and the United Nations should be reinforced and developed.

The International Year of Volunteers played its role superbly. It invigorated and energized the movement of volunteer action. In closing, let me pay tribute to all those who made that success possible. Special recognition goes to the United Nations Volunteers, who acted as a focal point for the International Year of Volunteers, and to the many civil society volunteer-involving organizations that played a vital role in ensuring that the Year had a global outreach. Recognition must also go to many Governments of the North and the South that contributed to many of the specific activities and events. But, above all, the utmost recognition and homage go to the millions of dedicated women and men around the globe who are acting out their sense of citizenship through voluntary action. Your cause is noble and your endeavours are invaluable in our common effort to bring about a better world. I wish you much success.

I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.8.

Ms. Egydio Villela (Brazil): On behalf of the 142 countries listed in document A/57/L.8/Add.1 and the delegations of Azerbaijan, Belize, Bulgaria, the Comoros, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Yemen, which have joined the original group of sponsors, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.8/Add.1, entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers".

That resolution recognizes the valuable contribution of the various forms of volunteering to economic and social development. It sees volunteerism as a powerful tool in overcoming social exclusion and discrimination, benefiting society at large, communities and the individual volunteer. It also recognizes that volunteerism — particularly at the community level — will help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as well as the objectives set out at other major United Nations conferences and summits. It takes stock of the widely positive results of the International Year of Volunteers and of the extensive network of committees established at all levels, with the broad participation of the different sectors of society. It welcomes the various developments of policies, the

enactment of legislation for the growth and development of volunteerism and the crucial role of the United Nations Volunteers in the preparation and implementation of the Year.

This draft resolution also provides guidance for our future actions. In the follow-up to the International Year, Governments and the Secretariat are called upon to observe and to promote 5 December as the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development. United Nations Volunteers is invited to enhance network capabilities as well as to expand information, knowledge and resource management through a global Internet volunteer resource. All stakeholders, particularly the private sector through corporate volunteering, are encouraged to continue to support voluntary activities and relevant organizations of the United Nations system are called upon to integrate volunteerism in its various forms into their policies, programmes and reports.

It is our hope that this draft resolution, which has already drawn wide support from member countries, will be adopted by consensus.

The mere fact that we are gathered here today is a demonstration of the success of our endeavour. Now, by turning our attention to the continuation of this success, we may be able in the long run to make the dream of a better world become a reality thanks to volunteerism. It is this dream that I would like to share with all representatives — the dream of engaging every human being in voluntary action aimed at the diligent and essential challenge of building a better world. Volunteerism allows for the empowerment of all persons. It furthers the participation of the individual in our common destiny.

To promote volunteer work is to enable all human beings to make the most of their lives. Volunteer work enriches the volunteer and transforms him or her into a better person. Better persons are needed for a better world. Volunteering also enhances the self-esteem of participants at both ends of the spectrum — at the giving and the receiving ends. It fosters tolerance, solidarity and trust. These are certainly building blocks for peace, for justice, for equality and for sustainable development.

The word volunteer comes from the Latin "*voluntas*", which means will, human will or free will. We must all be reminded of the true power and value of the human will. It was through the inspiration of the free will of our people that this Organization was created over the rubble of authoritarianism, conflict and discrimination. Only the force of the human will shall make the world a better place.

In recent years, Brazil has seen a growing involvement of civil society. Research indicates that one out of every four Brazilians has dedicated some of his or her time and talent to volunteer activities. The figures on corporate social investment reveal an impressive increase over the past year. One study shows that two thirds of Brazilian companies sponsor some kind of social activity. As a result of the activities organized in the context of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, there is a growing recognition in Brazil of the impact of civic participation and of the benefits of volunteering. Let me mention but a few of these activities.

First, thousands of secondary-level students all over the country have embraced volunteerism and are busy planning and executing projects that contribute to their education as well as to the increased integration of communities and schools. Secondly, high schools are promoting volunteer work as a highly desirable extracurricular activity. Schools are signalling to society that volunteering is a critical ingredient of education by acknowledging students volunteering work in report cards. Thirdly, businesses view favourably young adults who have records of social participation as students. Entrepreneurs are hiring job-seekers who have offered some of their free time and energy to the betterment of society. Fourthly, business managers are discovering that volunteer activities can boost team performance, with positive results in productivity terms and in the workplace atmosphere. Fifthly, volunteer work has moved away from the realm of charity, where it involved mostly persons who were not employed. It is now in the arena of entrepreneurship, where workers and non-workers engage freely in improving their communities. Today, volunteering is for everyone — women, children, adolescents, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Civil society in Brazil, through volunteer work, has placed itself at the heart of generating social capital and sustainable development awareness. Solidarity enhances the moral texture of our communities and the social fabric of our societies. In Brazil, we have come a little closer to making true our dream of empowering

every human being, but much more remains to be done and much more will be done.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): On behalf of the Government of Japan, I should like to thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau for assuming your important offices, and the representatives of the United Nations Volunteers for so successfully completing the preparations for this important meeting. My delegation pledges its cooperation to you as you preside over this meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the outcome and follow-up of the International Year of Volunteers.

Since its establishment in 1971, the United Nations Volunteers has engaged in missions all around the world in response to requests from the international community to support development, provide humanitarian assistance or ensure fair elections. It has strengthened volunteer activities in a variety of ways and played a remarkable role in mobilizing grass roots participation in international cooperation on a global scale in areas where only the United Nations can act effectively.

Last year, the United Nations and the international community celebrated the Year of Volunteers with great success. It remains necessary, however, for the people of the world to continue these activities in the years to come, based on the spirit of volunteerism.

Let me take this opportunity to ask a question. Why is volunteerism necessary? There are as many answers as there are places in the world. But volunteerism has its roots in the simple fact that people do not live in isolation. Throughout our lives, we are constantly in search of a better life. We strive to improve our situation in life and to enhance our well-being and our material environment. But is this the only way for us to live? I think not. Each of us has a heart, and we care about people who are in pain, and who are suffering. In other words, we are born to help each other. It is therefore necessary for us to carry this concept of volunteerism further forward. We can start with the smallest of communities around us and then expand the sphere of our volunteerism by sharing with others the pleasures and difficulties we have encountered and the lessons we have learned.

It is obvious that the United Nations, as the only universal institution in the world, can play a significant role in enhancing volunteerism. It is quite heartening for us that the international community has made considerable progress in this field since the celebration of the International Year of Volunteers in December last year. The exchange of information and experience has been helpful, and the recent enrichment of the International Year of Volunteers web site is proof of the strides we are making.

I would like briefly to touch upon the increase in volunteerism in Japan in recent years. For example, there were approximately 16,000 volunteer organizations and approximately 1.6 million volunteers in Japan in 1980. But by 2001, those numbers increased to approximately 97,000 and 7.2 million respectively.

In that context, I would like now to draw your attention to what the Government of Japan has been doing to facilitate volunteer activities in the past year. It has, for example, taken a number of measures in the area of public relations, awareness and information-gathering on volunteerism and human resources development. Overall, it has placed the greatest emphasis on the cultivation of volunteers and training courses that have been implemented with a view to developing youth volunteer leaders. In addition to the training courses, the Government of Japan will hold a symposium and workshop on volunteerism in February next year, to which it is inviting eminent volunteer leaders from around the world.

It is also important to facilitate volunteer activities in civil society institutionally. As the representative of Japan mentioned at the closing ceremony for the International Year of Volunteers last December, my Government has introduced a preferential tax system that is aimed at promoting donations to non-profit organizations. As well, the Government of Japan makes great efforts to publicize the observance of 5 December as International Volunteer Day. And at the initiative of civil society, there will be a variety of activities on that date this year.

Educational institutions are well positioned to make the significance of volunteerism more widely known. In Japan, primary and junior high school students do volunteer activities in their communities as part of their curriculum. And in recent years, more and more working people have begun to engage in volunteer activities. To promote this trend, the

Government of Japan has prepared a range of informational materials.

Furthermore, we have a unique system for assisting volunteer activities abroad. The Japanese postal savings system, under the campaign it is carrying out entitled "Postal savings for international voluntary aid", encourages account holders to donate the interest from their accounts. This has provided grant assistance in the amount of approximately $3 million to approximately 140 non-governmental organizations that have engaged in the 150 volunteer projects.

And in the context of international assistance on volunteer activities, the Japan International Cooperation Agency dispatches senior volunteers, who range from 40 to 69 years old, to developing countries in response to the growing number and types of requests for technical cooperation from developing countries. These senior volunteers are individuals who possess abundant knowledge and experience in a wide range of fields and are motivated by a desire to serve on a volunteer basis.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the United Nations Volunteers for the outstanding work they have done in expanding the volunteer spirit and express our sincere appreciation to Ms. Capeling-Alakija, the Executive Coordinator, and her staff, for their leadership. The people of Japan support volunteers and intend to continue to contribute to the activities of the United Nations Volunteers.

Mr. Moesby (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern Europe countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The dedication and enthusiasm that volunteers bring to their work and to projects in which they are involved is one of the best expressions of humanity — a simple desire to assist someone else without recompense, a basic element of human nature and a core value of the United Nations.

Since the launch of the International Year of Volunteers 2001, significant progress has been made towards enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of voluntary action, all of which are important goals of the International Year.

One key tool used in the pursuit of these goals merits special attention, namely the Internet. Through a significant use of this and other electronic media, volunteers have been able to expand their networks and enhance their exchange of knowledge and information. The Internet has connected the many diverse expressions of voluntary action and demonstrated its capacity as a multiplier of ideas and a means of sharing best practices. The EU welcomes the growth of volunteerism in cyberspace and encourages stakeholders to continue to make use of the opportunities provided by the Internet.

The challenge before us today is to consolidate the successes of the International Year and to ensure that the momentum created by the Year is harnessed effectively to move the volunteer agenda forward.

As a result of the International Year, legislation and relevant policies in many countries have been improved to remove possible obstacles to voluntary work and to create opportunities for voluntary action. Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be done in order fully to ensure that every society, and every individual, has the best possible opportunity to benefit from voluntary activities, both as volunteer and as beneficiary. The responsibility for this important task — to further expand the scope of voluntary activity and to secure its long-term viability — rests with Governments. The EU is convinced that this can most effectively be done by developing partnerships with civil society and the private sector. Joint action by the public authorities and volunteer associations can help both to achieve their common objectives.

The member States of the EU have used the impetus of the International Year to remove legal and administrative obstacles to voluntary activity in both the national and international contexts, guided by the strategic objectives formulated by the United Nations within the framework of the International Year. In our ongoing efforts to improve the environment for voluntary activity, we will look closely at the recommendations and information offered by the Secretary-General in his report as well as the

recommendations contained in the annex to last year's resolution 56/38.

Voluntary work promotes social participation and active citizenship, and it strengthens civil society. It can help maintain and improve society's stability and cohesion. Whatever its form, volunteering builds trust and solidarity. It has proved to be a means of reconciliation and reconstruction. When the underprivileged and the prosperous join together in voluntary activities, innovative partnerships can be created and bridges built between all sectors of society.

Voluntary activities have already made substantial contributions in the fields of promoting human rights and international solidarity, the combat against racism, environmental protection and sustainable development, and have thus helped in the implementation of the goals and commitments of the Millennium Declaration. By encouraging voluntary work, Governments as well as the international community can make significant progress in many areas of global interest and concern. For example, voluntary work is regarded as crucial for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those set out by international conferences and summits and contained in the Millennium Declaration.

This was recently confirmed in Johannesburg, where voluntary contributions were explicitly highlighted in several areas, including disaster management, the importance of ensuring safe drinking water, and environmental and social responsibility and accountability. Furthermore, the voluntary involvement of people in the projects and programmes affecting them directly — a step towards people-centred development — is a key factor for successful outcomes.

Yet, when drawing on voluntary work, Governments must recognize and respect the independent nature of such contributions. They can be of significant economic value for national economies. But the responsibility taken or the economic value of voluntary activity can never, and should never, replace the responsibility of Governments towards their citizens.

It is a recognized fact that volunteers gain a great personal reward from becoming involved in voluntary activities, in terms of both practical knowledge and the development of personal and occupational skills which can be drawn on in other aspects of life. An individual's engagement in this type of human and social activity enhances self-esteem and widens social, economic and cultural networks around the world. It is thus of utmost importance to promote a society in which all persons can involve themselves in voluntary activities, regardless of social, economic or cultural background.

The EU reiterates the particular importance of the voluntary involvement of young people and of older persons. Voluntary work can help develop creativity and a spirit of enterprise in young people. It also makes for social innovation. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April this year, recognized volunteering on the part of older persons as essential for the full implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the Assembly. When combined, these two groups of volunteers allow for intergenerational transfer and the development of knowledge, experience and innovation, to the benefit of society and of the volunteers themselves.

The European Union takes this opportunity to draw Member States' attention to the draft resolution on the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, which was submitted today by Brazil.

We also wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the United Nations Volunteers programme and its role as central coordinator for volunteers and voluntary work.

We hope that all stakeholders will use today's debate and the celebration of International Volunteers Day on 5 December to demonstrate their true commitment to further raising the profile of volunteering, to make volunteerism prosper, and to allow international society to gain from this example of humanity.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The International Year of Volunteers is an extremely important concept in the context of our modern world, where pressures are increasing daily because of the limited potential of Governments to deal with the unlimited needs of peoples — hence the importance of civic action to bridge this gap through organized collective efforts that are based on the reorientation of resources towards sectors and areas that need them most.

Egypt attaches great importance to civic action and to the work being done by non-governmental

organization (NGOs) and international organizations, as well as to the efforts being made by Governments and by the private sector. Egypt was among the first countries to set up a Committee for the International Year of Volunteers; it did so to reaffirm the principles and objectives set out by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/17, which proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. Egypt therefore set up that Committee, which included in its membership representatives of all parties relevant to volunteer work, such as the Government sector and the private and civic sectors. Preparations were thus coordinated for the Year and for creating a mechanism for managing voluntary efforts in subsequent years.

Egypt celebrated the International Year of Volunteers in a practical way, focusing on certain aspects, one of which is information. Emphasis was placed on the informational aspect of voluntary activities in various fields, in order to serve society and enhance volunteerism, in particular among young people. Television and radio debates and interviews have been held with volunteers to discuss their various projects and activities. A number of debates were also organized and televised on the role of volunteers in society. In that way their needs were assessed so as to enable their various problems to be resolved. In that context, a commemorative stamp was issued on the occasion of the International Year of Volunteers. Secondly, the Egyptian Ministry of Youth organized numerous contests which were carried out by the general union of scouts and counsellors, including the national project devoted to developing Egyptian villages. Such projects had double benefits: developing and modernizing many villages and improving living conditions in them and strengthening the spirit of belonging and participation among the young. In this context, I should like to refer to the international conference to help those with special needs that was organized in August 2001 by the general union of scouts. A guide, the first of its kind, has been drawn up for volunteer organizations in Egypt and other Arab countries. A register of volunteer pioneers in Egypt has been set up, which emphasizes the work of such pioneers so as to set an example for young people. A training camp for volunteers and various governmental stakeholders has also been established.

The Government is making use of volunteers in various official delegations — some of them attending the international meetings that took place in the framework of the Year. Civil society is also involved, and the business sector has stepped up its efforts in this respect. These efforts have been physical as well as material. This demonstrates the interest that Egypt and its people attach to this Year, and we have joined the sponsors of this draft resolution before the General Assembly on the follow-up of the Year. I would like to reaffirm the importance of continuing the efforts undertaken in the context of volunteerism, at both the national and international levels, at the end of the International Year of Volunteers, with a view to sustaining the idea that in turn encourages young people to continue their efforts to serve their country and society.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): It has been seven years since the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development firmly placed the question of social development at the centre of the international policy debate. The Copenhagen Declaration laid out the fundamental concepts, principles and goals of social development and agreed upon a number of commitments. Together with the Declaration, the Programme of Action addressed the creation of a favourable environment for social development and focused on the three core issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration.

The eradication of poverty — the uncompleted task of the twentieth century, and now one of the principal objectives for the twenty-first century — was emphasized at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

In the Millennium Declaration, a clear target was set to halve extreme poverty by 2015, thus reaffirming the vital importance of fighting poverty for the process of social development of all societies, particularly in the developing countries. Along the same lines, the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty also called for the launching of a global campaign to this end.

One important element in ensuring concrete progress towards the realization of the established goals is that both national Governments and the international community should undertake concerted efforts in a mutually supportive manner. It is well known that many Governments throughout the developing world have been trying in earnest to fight

against poverty at the national level, and they have achieved quite encouraging results. In Viet Nam, for example, within the last 10 years the poverty rate has been reduced from 30 per cent to 10 per cent. At present, there are still more than 1,000 villages listed as being in extreme poverty, but such poverty will be wiped out by 2015, as solemnly pledged by our Government.

At the international level, the United Nations system and its agencies, funds and programmes have been actively responsive with regard to this special responsibility, and their important contributions have been widely recognized. However, in assisting national Governments to devise and implement effectively their respective programmes on poverty eradication, sufficient international cooperation, including experience-sharing, the extension and expansion of technical cooperation, capacity-building and the active engagement and support of the relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are of the utmost importance and need to be emphasized.

Another important issue on our agenda is people with disabilities. According to statistics provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, there are around 600 million disabled persons in the world, more than two thirds of whom are living in the Asia and Pacific region. Furthermore, according to World Bank statistics, disabled persons account for one fifth of the poorest people in the world. The increasing number of disabled persons can be attributed to social problems, environmental deterioration, disease, natural and man-made disasters, and war and armed conflict in many parts of the world. The question of social integration, ensuring their equal rights and providing them with opportunities, is therefore of crucial importance for many countries throughout the world. We welcome the establishment and operationalization of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which will fully address the rights and dignity of such people. We wish the Ad Hoc Committee great success in its endeavours.

After decades of severe war, Viet Nam has a high percentage of people with disabilities. There are more than 5 million disabled persons of all ages in the country with varied disabilities — 3 million of whom are war victims, accounting for 6 per cent of the population. Responding to the international call reflected in the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992, and the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century, and in keeping with its longstanding tradition of looking after the unfortunate, the Government and the people of Viet Nam truly care for vulnerable persons, among them the disabled. For such people, this is a question not only of implementing specific policies, but also of achieving genuine integration. The Government has therefore been advocating a close linkage between economic and social development, as well as social progress reflected in special care and the creation of equal opportunities for vulnerable persons and persons with disability.

In recent years, Viet Nam has achieved tremendous success in taking care of and ensuring protection for disabled persons through, inter alia, the provision of social subsidies, rehabilitation centres, national training programmes, employment-creation schemes and poverty eradication projects. In its effort, Vietnam enjoys precious cooperation and assistance from the international community, especially from United Nations specialized agencies and regional organizations.

One question of particular concern to our Government at the moment is that of taking care of people, particularly child victims of toxic chemicals such as Agent Orange, which were employed during the war. Their plight is so miserable that they cannot wait until research on this issue is finalized. The Government has allotted subsidies from the State budget to help them. A drive for charitable assistance has been launched throughout the country and has received good response. A number of countries and non-governmental organizations have delivered great assistance in this regard. However, more attention and further assistance are needed, and it is our hope against hope that the United Nations, within its appropriate possible means, will take the question under serious consideration and encourage the international community to cooperate and assist Viet Nam in this humanitarian endeavour.

Viet Nam warmly welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "International Year of Volunteers: outcomes and future perspectives". The report provides us with comprehensive information on what the world community has achieved in the International Year of Volunteers 2001 and envisions what is needed in terms of follow-up activities. The

Year was successful by any account, with the high profile recognition of the role of volunteerism in development and of its valuable contributions to society, together with the conviction that voluntary action was needed more than ever before. The goals of the Year — enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism — have been fully achieved with the generation of increased awareness of the achievements and further potential of voluntary activities, with the establishment of more than 100 national committees on volunteers in every part of the world.

Though the concept of volunteerism is quite new, Viet Nam was quick to respond with the establishment of a National Steering Committee on Volunteers. During the year, this committee focused on many activities, such as the organization of writing competitions on volunteer experiences in community life and national development and the publication of booklets on volunteers in Viet Nam, in order to disseminate information on the International Year of Volunteers. Students and youth were encouraged to go to remote and disadvantaged areas to help, or to assist with, children in especially difficult circumstances, such as homeless and street children and child victims of Agent Orange. These activities have been recognized by the United Nations.

In conclusion, volunteerism has both social and cultural perspectives. According to some accounts, every volunteer is an actual roving ambassador as he or she contributes to fostering further understanding among peoples. By working together they contribute towards building solidarity, encourage participation and ownership, create networks of reciprocity and reinforce a sense of collective responsibility. It is at the core of the United Nations development goals and, therefore, serves the interests of social development.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Bridgeland (United States): I am pleased to represent the United States of America in my remarks before the United Nations General Assembly in support of volunteer service in the United States and around the globe.

I would like to thank the Points of Light Foundation and the Association of Junior Leagues International for convening and leading the United States International Year of Volunteers Steering Committee. Their organizations have provided sustained leadership to bring volunteers together to meet important community needs throughout the United States and overseas.

It is my pleasure and privilege to speak to you today as a member of President George W. Bush's administration, as Assistant to the President and Director of his USA Freedom Corps. Each January, the President of the United States addresses the United States Congress to report to them and to the American people on the state of the union. It is traditional for the President to present the members of Congress and the American people his vision for how to make that union stronger.

In January 2002, President George W. Bush laid out a vision for a stronger union that was rooted firmly in the power of volunteer service to meet vital needs and to safeguard the principles of freedom. He issued a call to service to every man, woman and child in the United States to dedicate at least two years over the course of their lifetimes to service to America's communities, to America and to the world. He created the USA Freedom Corps, the effort I now direct, to help every American answer that call to service and to foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility for decades to come.

The USA Freedom Corps is a coordinating council chaired by President Bush that oversees the development of Government policies that promote, enhance and support volunteer service. Among our top priorities is reforming and expanding federally supported service programmes. President Bush has pledged to double the number of Peace Corps volunteers, so that by 2007, approximately 15,000 Americans will be sharing American compassion abroad. He has also challenged the Peace Corps to reach more countries around the world and to expand its services to include important global needs, such as quality housing, through partnerships with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

He has also pledged to reform and strengthen domestic programmes that support service by using senior Americans and young Americans to recruit, train and supervise volunteers around the country through our Corporation for National and Community Service. And he created new programmes that enable individuals to help their communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies of all kinds, including

threats of terrorism. Through these new federally-supported programmes, Americans are volunteering with police and fire departments; doctors and nurses are joining in a Medical Reserve Corps; and individuals are being trained to teach emergency response skills to their neighbours. These Citizen Corps volunteers will support their police officers and firefighters in times of earthquake, fire and flood, and in response to crime and terrorism.

The USA Freedom Corps is also working with community-serving organizations, such as hospitals, schools, houses of worship and other non-profit organizations that make up our volunteer infrastructure, to help them recruit, train and utilize millions of volunteers across the United States to deliver vital community services. We are helping them to evaluate and to improve their capacity to effectively utilize the talents of volunteers. By supporting research, developing and disseminating best practices and creating other resources that can be used by organizations around the country, the USA Freedom Corps will cultivate lasting changes in the voluntary sector.

With the help of organizations, including the Points of Light Foundation, we have already created the USA Freedom Corps Volunteer Network, the largest on-line clearinghouse of volunteer service opportunities ever established. Individuals can enter their postal code and their area of interest, such as serving youth, hunger and homelessness, or education, to find part-time or full-time service opportunities with more than 60,000 service organizations, working in their hometowns, across the country, and in countries around the world.

Our partnerships also extend to businesses and educational institutions. With their help, we are working to create changes in human behaviour that will last for decades. Leaders of American businesses have responded to President Bush's call to service by creating the Business Strengthening America initiative, to engage their employees and consumers in serving others. Member companies commit to changes in corporate practices, such as offering paid leave to their employees for volunteer service, sponsoring employee volunteer efforts and enlisting consumers in volunteer service though their products and services.

The USA Freedom Corps is also working with the hundreds of thousands of elementary and secondary schools and colleges and universities around our country to help our young people develop habits of service that will last for a lifetime. Schools can support service by making it a part of academic lessons or by sponsoring service activities and volunteer centres as part of the support structure for students. The United States Department of Education and private research organizations have measured increases in volunteer service by young people, and particularly in school-assisted volunteer service, over the past several decades. Researchers are now looking to uncover how those who volunteer as young people behave as adults. The initial research is very promising for those who advocate investing in service opportunities for students and young people. In a recent sample, two thirds of all adults who reported volunteering in the past year reported that they had also volunteered as young people. Those same individuals were also significantly more likely to be engaged in philanthropic giving to non-profit organizations.

Volunteer service also offers American educators a vital opportunity to teach students about the democratic institutions and fundamental principles that are the foundations of the United States. While the office I direct is less than one year old, its mission is part of the fabric of a long tradition of volunteer service in the United States. Volunteer-based organizations and the efforts of the volunteers who power them have played an important role in meeting the needs of urban and rural communities since our nation was founded. Yet too few of America's students are learning about our rich history and the democratic principles and institutions that safeguard their freedoms. Through service to others we seek to help them connect their service to communities today with the ideas and actions of the past that have helped to shape our national identity.

We also seek to reverse what has been a decline in overall volunteer service and civic participation in the United States among adults by shaping new generations that are more likely to be involved in meeting our future challenges. According to research on volunteer service and civic participation, fewer and fewer American adults have been volunteering their time and participating in civic activities over the past three decades. To accomplish our mission and to reach President Bush's goals, the USA Freedom Corps must reverse that trend.

To measure the effectiveness of our efforts, the USA Freedom Corps has partnered with the United States Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labour Statistics to create a new national volunteer service indicator to measure volunteer behaviour from a nationwide sample of more than 60,000 diverse American households. The nationwide survey will create a reliable and comprehensive measurement of volunteer behaviour that will help the USA Freedom Corps and others engaged in supporting volunteer service to evaluate their impact. To date, sample sizes for evaluating volunteer service trends have been relatively small, and reliable annual comparisons have been difficult to make. This new volunteer-service indicator will set a new standard for research in this field. We have collaborated with leaders in the United Kingdom and Canada on this effort, and have had productive discussions with many members of the European Union on measuring social capital and fostering civil society.

That new research, and our continuing efforts through the USA Freedom Corps, are a priority of President Bush's Administration, and will continue to be as long as there are human needs to be addressed through kindness and compassion. Each night in communities across the United States and around the world children go to bed hungry or in a home that does not provide adequate shelter. Each morning people awake without clean water to drink. And each day men and women go unprotected from, or untreated for, diseases and disorders that might be prevented, treated or cured. These are needs known in every community, and they are needs that must be addressed not only by Governments but also through the time and the care of volunteers.

The USA Freedom Corps will continue in its efforts to engage every man, woman and child in the United States in service to our neighbours. We hope to learn lessons from the nations represented here about how they are cultivating volunteer service. In addition, through our efforts we might also help other nations looking for ways that their leaders and their Governments can become involved in harnessing the time and talents of their people in volunteer service. We would look forward to sharing what we learn in our efforts to support research and measurement at the national level; to help establish and encourage the adoption of effective practices for using volunteers; and to make volunteer service a part of the structure and function of every school, business and community across this country. We would also welcome the opportunity to be joined by other Government leaders around the world who are willing to make a call to service that resonates across their communities, as it is doing in the United States now.

We can all look to the United Nations Volunteers programme as a model for our own future endeavours. Since 1970, the United Nations Volunteers programme has worked on issues ranging from agriculture to education. Each year, 5,000 United Nations volunteers from 150 countries work to improve communities around the world. They include a young woman using her time to create an online resource library for children with disabilities and their families, a man serving as a drug prevention counsellor and a woman bringing compassion and food to victims of natural disasters. Each one of those United Nations Volunteers is a beacon of hope.

I thank the United Nations for this opportunity to address the Assembly today to discuss the dedication and impact of millions of Americans who are improving our country, and whose compassion extends beyond its boundaries. I also thank the United Nations for its support and commitment to the United Nations Year of Volunteers. The 123 nations that created committees to promote volunteer service are testaments to its success. But there is more to do. I hope this important discussion will be a milestone in a worldwide effort to make a difference in the lives of others through volunteer service. Each of us must continue to ask ourselves what Martin Luther King, Jr., has called life's most persistent and urgent question: What are you doing for others?

Mr. Al-Suiaiti (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "International Year of Volunteers: outcomes and future perspectives" (A/57/352). The report refers to the work done by volunteers at the national, regional and international levels. It also celebrates recognition of volunteer work and seeks to ensure respect for volunteering, to facilitate their work and to establish a network of volunteers. I would also like to pay tribute to the remarkable role played by United Nations Volunteers in this endeavour. We welcome the wide observance of the International Year of Volunteers at the international level. We welcome as well the efforts of national committees in this regard.

The achievement of social and economic development is not based solely on the efforts of Governments, but also on the combination of the efforts of civil society organizations, the private sector and all those millions who participate daily in volunteer acts throughout the world. Volunteerism is part and parcel of the cultural heritage of all peoples of the world despite their diversity. The International Year of Volunteers bears out that fact, and also serves to recognize the importance of volunteer work in development.

Volunteer social work is not alien to our society because our religion, Islam, encourages volunteer work. There are numerous suras in the Qur'an and in the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad that urge the utilization of one's good health, wealth, time and youth to serve those who need help and to advance society. Islam stipulates that individuals perform volunteer work in the service of society and religion. This will ensure self-fulfilment and social integrations.

We have promoted social volunteerism in many ways by providing assistance to the needy, orphans, students, those seeking marriage, debtors and others. The institutionalization of such volunteer work began in 1974 with the establishment of the first volunteer society for rehabilitating the disabled. Several other societies and institutions intended to utilize and promote people's potential have been established, enabling women in particular to volunteer in the service of society.

Qatar has made great efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of Volunteers in response to international appeals and resolutions. Therefore, we wish to inform the General Assembly of what has been achieved at the governmental and civil levels.

At the governmental level, and recognizing the importance of volunteerism in the area of social development and the important role of volunteers in serving their society, the Supreme Family Council — the institutional tool for the protection and development of the family — has, since its inception in 1988, created five special volunteer committees for the affairs of children, women, youth, the elderly and those with special needs. Those committees are made up of national experts of both genders. They work on a volunteer basis to enact legislation and recommend policies and programmes within the area of work of each committee.

A high-level national committee has also been set up to coordinate action between civil societies and private institutions that work on promoting social work and developing volunteer work so that there can be harmony between them and duplication can be avoided. That committee has established and implemented a comprehensive programme for the International Year of Volunteers to raise awareness about the importance of volunteerism.

The Qatar Centre for Volunteer Work has recently been established as a civil institution under the supervision of the General Youth Service in Qatar. It is intended to raise volunteer awareness among the young. This Centre will train the youth of both genders to support volunteer programmes and activities, organize training sessions for volunteers and prepare studies and publications devoted to volunteer work.

At the civil level, and recognizing the importance of the role of the private sector in promoting volunteerism in our society, development charity institutions and the private sector have established an annual prize to demonstrate to volunteers the importance of their giving and of their efforts in enriching and perpetuating volunteer work. Based on that initiative, we have recently honoured children who have performed volunteer work in order to inculcate that attitude in their minds.

Finally, my delegation supports the draft resolution on the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, to continue the momentum that has been initiated during the celebration of this Year. We thank volunteers everywhere in the world for their contribution to creating a better world for all.

Mr. Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): For reasons that are not worth mentioning, Honduras came late to the commemoration of the International Year of Volunteers. However, Honduras, perhaps more than any other county in the world, can testify to the importance and value of volunteerism.

Four years ago, during the disaster caused by hurricane Mitch, which caused thousands of deaths and destroyed many of our bridges, roads and highways — damage that still has not been fully repaired — the Honduran people were able to show the spirit of solidarity of our compatriots, who, even in the midst of

their own tragedy, came to the aid of those most affected and most in need. Likewise and even more importantly, Honduras can attest to international volunteerism because on that same occasion the international community ran to our assistance. The very lives of the volunteers — who came with no other interest than to help us exactly when we most needed it, during the greatest disaster of our entire history — were often in danger. We thank them on behalf of the Government and people of Honduras.

For that reason, and mindful of the fact that the future of mankind will be better with the assistance in solidarity of volunteers, Honduras, in addition to expressing heartfelt thanks, wishes to propose to the Assembly the creation of a university for volunteerism; a university that would nourish the seeds of volunteerism that have been in all human spirits since the very moment of our birth; a university where young people, adults, business people and possibly even those in government could come to study and develop the full potential of volunteerism. It cannot be a mere coincidence that exactly 1,000 years ago the first university of the world was established — the University at Bologna — among whose famous guests were Beckett, Alighieri, Copernicus and Marconi. It was the precursor of all the technology that currently is progressing at an incredible rate in the world today. That is a world that is ready for and in need of a university for the study of volunteerism.

Poor as it is, Honduras, with a great deal of gratitude and looking toward the future, offers the international community the basic infrastructure for that project. In our very beautiful land we have lush mountains, sunny beaches and green valleys with the tranquillity and climate necessary for study and concentration for all the new Copernicuses, Alighieris, Becketts and Marconis of world volunteerism. There, in the diversity and beauty of our countryside, they will be able to study and think of the best way to build a better world. I can guarantee that. That university for volunteerism is a humble way of saying, Honduran style, with all one's heart, thank you.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts in directing the deliberations of this session. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/57/352) and the valuable information that it contains with regard to this agenda item.

Despite all the pledges made by heads of State or Government at the international conferences on social development that have been convened over the past decade to enhance the possibilities of social development — culminating in the collective international commitments undertaken in the Political Declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg, to strengthen and coordinate economic and social development measures in developing and poor countries — billions of people still live in deteriorating economic and social conditions and lack the basic requirements of human life. Few of those commitments have been fulfilled, while the majority of them remain unfulfilled, as a result of the huge obstacles and challenges posed by extreme poverty, fatal contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, armed conflicts, organized crime and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The United Arab Emirates, reaffirming its support for all the recommendations and outcomes of international conferences on social development and sustainable development, and convinced that social development depends mainly on political security and stability and the provision of means for economic development, stresses the importance of the following. Concerted and coordinated international efforts must be undertaken through United Nations organs to find viable and lasting solutions to armed conflicts and wars and to settle existing disputes in accordance with the principles of the Charter and international legitimacy. The commitments undertaken at development conferences must be fully and urgently fulfilled, especially those calling for the allocation of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of developed and donor countries as official development assistance to developing countries — as stressed in the International Conference on Financing for Development at Monterrey — and for the provision of official development assistance to developing countries without conditions or intervention in their internal affairs. The international community, in particular donor countries and international monetary organizations, should help to integrate developing countries into the global economy by establishing an impartial and non-discriminating multilateral trading system based on international law and universal norms. Developing countries should be provided with scientific materials and modern technologies in order to strengthen their economic and social development. That will require the adoption of effective,

comprehensive, fair and lasting solutions to the foreign-debt problems of those countries, including the option to write off such debts.

Guided by the directives of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the State, in which he regards the citizens of the United Arab Emirates as the country's true wealth and the primary focus of its development efforts, the Government has adopted a number of development policies aimed at developing the nation's human resources and at raising the standard of living for all its citizens. Those policies have placed the United Arab Emirates among the world's top 50 countries in terms of human development, according to United Nations standards, in 2001. The United Arab Emirates has made remarkable progress in the field of social development by adopting a development strategy based on the following.

Believing in the importance of education as the first step towards the achievement of social progress, the Government has provided free, high-quality education for all citizens, from the elementary to the university level. The Government has also introduced the latest educational technologies and methods, including the latest developments in the field of information and communications technology, as eradicating illiteracy is one of the Government's main concerns.

The Government has also conducted campaigns to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis B and other diseases. In addition, we have established a marriage fund that helps citizens to start families without financial burdens, and a comprehensive social security system that provides monthly subsidies to vulnerable groups and specialized centres for the rehabilitation of the disabled.

In accordance with the spirit of Islam, which calls for care and respect for elderly persons, the Government has established specialized health centres, as well as social and recreational centres for the aged, and it has helped to establish many volunteer and charitable societies that provide humanitarian assistance at the local and international levels.

The social development policy of the United Arab Emirates has not been exclusive to the country itself; we have worked to promote social development and cultural diversity through bilateral and regional agreements by establishing schools, orphanages and houses of worship in many friendly countries, in addition to providing grants and favourable-term loans to developing countries. We have also hosted numerous conferences and seminars and have participated in many international events related to social development, housing and the environment.

In conclusion, we hope that our discussions will help to fulfil the principles of the Charter, which emphasize the rights of societies to development. We call upon the Organization to strengthen its efforts to attain world peace and stability and to undertake measures to eradicate poverty and to achieve economic and social development, as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration and as emphasized in the declarations concluded at development conferences, especially the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): At the outset, New Zealand would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "International Year of Volunteers: outcomes and future perspectives" (A/57/352), which is a useful overview of what was achieved both during and since the 2001 International Year of Volunteers.

The Government of New Zealand welcomed the decision to designate 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. We congratulate all those involved in the International Year of Volunteers, including the various United Nations bodies — particularly United Nations Volunteers — Member States, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, for their efforts, which have contributed to the success of the Year and to the follow-up on its outcomes. New Zealand shares the view of the Secretary-General that the Year has done much to increase understanding of the concept of volunteerism in all its forms throughout the world and the vital contribution it makes to so many societies. There have been many significant developments as a result.

In reflecting on the follow-up to the Year, we would like to take the opportunity to draw on some of New Zealand's own experiences with volunteering.

New Zealand has a long-standing tradition of volunteering. Volunteers are vital contributors in diverse areas, including sport and recreation, emergency services, early childhood education, care of children and young people, care of sick people or people with disabilities, Maori community activities, churches, conservation, fisheries protection,

international development assistance, women's refuges, culture and heritage, and citizens' advice.

New Zealand values volunteers as contributors to strong communities and civil society, culture, individual well-being and family and *whānau* development. One of our aims is to form real and meaningful partnerships with volunteers and voluntary organizations to work towards a common goal of providing the best support and services possible for local communities. The Secretary-General acknowledges in his report that the International Year of Volunteers produced greater acknowledgement of diversity in volunteerism and its contribution to society. One of the debates that emerged in New Zealand as a result of the Year was the question of different cultural perspectives on volunteering. On the one hand, we have the predominant Anglo-European perspective and, on the other, we have perspectives of Maori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, on how they contribute in a voluntary way. Pacific peoples and ethnic communities also have their different perspectives.

New Zealand fully agrees that partnerships between Governments and civil society are important for promoting volunteerism. Governments play a crucial role in fostering an environment that encourages volunteers. Like many other countries highlighted in the report, in New Zealand the International Year of Volunteers was organized through partnership between Government and the voluntary sector. A Government-appointed Ministerial Reference Group established for the International Year of Volunteers was comprised of representatives of the community and voluntary sector and was responsible for promotion and coordination of the Year and for providing advice to Government on volunteer issues.

New Zealand was one of three countries noted in the Secretary-General's report that increased funding to provide longer-term support to the voluntary sector as a result of the Year. Some 2.19 million New Zealand dollars were allocated to strengthen the infrastructure of volunteering organizations over three years. This contributed specifically towards the formation of Volunteering New Zealand; the creation of new voluntary centres, especially in rural and isolated areas; funding for volunteering within Maori, Pacific peoples and ethnic communities; and the expansion of Web-based volunteering resources.

A Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship was released at the end of the International Year of Volunteers. Signed by the Prime Minister, the Statement is the Government's commitment to building strong and respectful relationships with the community sector. The Government also created a new portfolio in 2001, the Minister Responsible for the Community and Voluntary Sector, again indicating our intention to raise the status of this sector of New Zealand society.

To foster an environment that encourages volunteers, the New Zealand Government also set up a project at the start of 2001 to consider policy on volunteers and volunteering. This project reviewed and made recommendations on legislation towards volunteering, identified ways in which the Government could enhance the ability of people to volunteer and worked to ensure that governmental policy supported volunteerism and volunteers, including in relation to the fulfilment of cultural obligations by Maori, Pacific peoples and ethnic groups. Work in this area continues.

Finally, the International Year of Volunteers provided States with the opportunity to examine and promote the role of volunteering at national, regional and international levels. For New Zealand, it has considerably boosted support for and raised the public profile of volunteering. The Government has implemented practical steps to show the community and voluntary sector that it recognizes the vital contribution made by volunteers, both economically and socially. We will continue to work towards the aims and objectives of the International Year of Volunteers in the broader international community.

Mr. Tesch (Australia): Like other delegations, Australia warmly welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "International Year of Volunteers 2001: outcomes and future perspectives". Australia was an active and keen participant throughout the International Year of Volunteers, which was a great success in Australia. It is our privilege to provide this General Assembly with information about some of the highlights for us, thereby acknowledging before the international community the extraordinary contributions that are routinely made by ordinary people in our country.

The written statement being circulated contains more details provided by the Department of Family and Community Services in Australia, and I will confine

myself to summarizing some of the key elements of that.

The International Year of Volunteers 2001 provided the impetus for the federal, State and local Governments, as well as communities, business and the media in Australia, to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary contribution volunteers make to Australia and to the Australian way of life. It gave all Australians the opportunity to say "thank you". The Minister for Family and Community Services oversaw Australia's successful programme for the Year at the request of the Prime Minister of Australia, and the Governor General was appointed the national patron of the International Year of Volunteers.

As in other countries, there is a long tradition of volunteering in Australia. Some 32 per cent of adult Australians volunteer their time and energy to not-for-profit organizations. It is pleasing to note that more Australians are choosing to volunteer. The strongest growth is recorded among people aged under 25 and among 55-64-year olds. It seems that our older volunteers have some more time on their hands after children grow up, and they also have very valuable labour-force skills to contribute.

Throughout 2000, the federal Department of Family and Community Services conducted extensive consultations with community organizations, business and Government to develop the key objectives for the International Year of Volunteers. These were to recognize and celebrate the outstanding contribution volunteers make to a strong, cohesive Australian society; to have communities, business, the media and Government work together to build a society that encourages and nurtures a culture of volunteering; and to support Australian communities in their engagement in valuable and productive voluntary activities.

Australian Government initiatives during the Year were divided into three areas: first, funding to the community and voluntary sectors; secondly, the development of key partnerships; and thirdly, a communication strategy. One of the highlights of the International Year of Volunteers in Australia was the overwhelmingly positive response by community groups to the small grants and small-equipment grants programmes. Through these programmes, the Australian Government provided 12.9 million Australian dollars in grants to more than 2,100 organizations to help them recognize, celebrate and support volunteers. Through the small-equipment grants programme, a further 2,800 organizations were able to purchase equipment to make the work of their volunteers easier, safer or more enjoyable.

The promotion of the International Year of Volunteers was done in partnership with businesses and communities and included sponsorship of a major national conference, as well as International Year of Volunteers awards in partnership with one of Australia's major banks and with local Government; funding to establish a recruitment database for the organization Volunteering Australia; and celebration and acknowledgement nation-wide of volunteers helping to clean up and preserve the environment.

While the main aim of the International Year of Volunteers communication strategy was to promote the International Year, it also sought to raise awareness, particularly among non-volunteers, of the range, scope and positive experience of volunteering. The Australian Government launched a different celebratory theme each month to provide a framework for organizations planning their International Year of Volunteers activities. Communicating the International Year of Volunteers message was also done in partnership with another major milestone for Australia: the centenary of the establishment of Australia as a Federation. It is noteworthy that many of the achievements within Australia since the establishment of federation in 1901 were the result of the hard work and dedication of volunteers. The Government recognized that through the production of community service announcements broadcast on national television.

The Australian Government also recognized the invaluable contribution of community groups in Australia during the International Year of Volunteers and the need to consider where we go from here. An International Year of Volunteers Community Council of Advice, co-chaired by Volunteering Australia and Australian Volunteers International, actively gathered input throughout the year for a report entitled "A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers". It was presented to the Government at the final event of the International Year of Volunteers, on 5 December, International Volunteer Day.

It is encouraging to note that since 2000, ongoing federal Government funding to support volunteering has more than doubled, and research continues on how

best to support volunteers. The capacity of the sector is being further developed through programmes which, for example, enhance the development of volunteers' skills. The Australian Government is confident that the activities and events held during the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 have left a strong and lasting impression and provided a solid base to further develop this important sector of Australian community life.

Mr. Lee Ho-jin (Republic of Korea): My delegation believes that the wide promotion of, and the active participation in, volunteerism is most relevant to the work of the United Nations in achieving the objectives enshrined in its Charter. Thus, taking stock of the accomplishments of the International Year of Volunteers, I would like to applaud the advances made for volunteerism, as contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/57/352) and commend the efforts of the United Nations Volunteers for its facilitating role.

The spirit of volunteerism that was promoted worldwide in 2001 has made a positive contribution to the lives of the Korean people, and the effect is likely to take a firm hold in the coming years. Traditionally, Koreans have lived in agricultural communities, with longstanding customs in volunteer service and sharing, particularly during the labour-intensive farming season and in moments of hardship or tragedy. The tradition has gradually dissipated during the process of rapid modernization and industrialization. But with the growth of civic activism in recent decades, volunteerism has found fertile ground for a new era of possibilities and contributions to be made at the local, national and global levels.

Many other countries will have had the same experience. However, as we agreed in resolution 56/38, there is no universal model of best practices or measures in volunteering. Volunteer activities are most effective when fully responsive to the particular circumstances on the ground. The one common denominator would be that they are voluntary, unpaid and helpful.

Another commonality, as can be seen in the Secretary General's report, is that there are diverse ways in which volunteerism in being promoted around the world to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century: the enhanced recognition of volunteerism through research and by institutions and organizations; the facilitation through policy and legislation, infrastructure development, funding and private sector support and the participation of all social groups; networking among volunteer groups; promotion through mass media and campaigns; and utilization of information and communication technologies. All five of those means of promotion offer a useful blueprint for efforts to incorporate and strengthen volunteerism as capital for social and economic development.

Volunteer activities are the purview of civic groups and the private sector. But Governments can play a facilitating, supportive role. In my country, the Government operates a system of support for volunteer activities, including through the provision of public facilities to voluntary service organizations, project-based subsidies and the improvement of the relevant laws. The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs provides subsidies to non-governmental organizations engaged in volunteering programmes. Since 2000, $12.5 million has been disbursed annually by the Ministry in support of volunteer activities undertaken by civic groups. In addition, other ministries and local governments frequently have their own programme of support for registered non-governmental organizations. In 2000, the relevant Ministry and local governments jointly formed local volunteering centres around the country, where the recruiting and training of volunteers takes place, along with the publication and distribution of manuals. Furthermore, to make the most of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers, the Korean National International Year of Volunteers Committee was formed to coordinate all the events and programmes of the year.

The year 2002 was very busy for volunteers in Korea, with both good and bad times, and the experience has greatly strengthened the nation's capacity in volunteerism. On the happy side, 2002 will be remembered as the year when Korea successfully co-hosted the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup. In each city around the country where the matches were played, soccer officials recruited anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 volunteers and trained them to assist in running the games and providing whatever assistance soccer fans and tourists would require to enjoy the games and their stay in the country. No doubt, much of the credit for the good order surrounding the largest international sports gathering to be held in the country has to go to those selfless volunteers.

The spirit of volunteerism rose in hard times too, when a devastating typhoon hit the eastern part of the country in late August. Roads leading into the worst-hit areas were lined up with cars and buses, taking volunteers into those communities to help out in the relief and recovery effort. Many of them were small groups of people: housewives, family clans and company co-workers who had spontaneously grouped under a shared sense of duty to help people in need.

The Asian Games, held from 29 September to 14 October in Busan, South Korea, were another proud episode in the annals of volunteerism in Korea this year. The careful recruiting and training of some 17,300 volunteers by the host city, Busan, was instrumental in the success of the Games.

In conclusion, much has been done in my country this year to implement resolution 56/38, and with good results. Now, as we prepare to celebrate an International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development on 5 December, my delegation looks to the future and contemplates two closely related subjects. First, as in all realms of human activity in this age of diminishing borders, while keeping its feet firmly grounded in action at the local grass-roots level, volunteerism should now be promoted and strengthened in the context of the globalizing world. Secondly, the possibilities offered by information and communication technologies should be fully embraced to support the traditional on-the-scene approach of volunteerism. Following those two basic directions, and building upon the momentum generated by the International Year of Volunteers, my delegation is fully committed to taking volunteerism to new heights at home and abroad.

Mr. Nambiar (India): India is happy to participate in the deliberations on the outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its follow-up. The General Assembly decided at the fifty-second session, in 1997, to observe 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. This was in recognition of the need to celebrate the manifold contributions made to society by volunteers and volunteering. The international community had clearly concluded that not enough had been done to highlight the achievements of volunteerism.

Volunteerism has been one of the few success stories of society globally. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General entitled "International Year of Volunteers: outcome and future perspectives" (A/57/352) presents a gratifying, and indeed heartening, picture. According to the report, 123 National Committees were formed during the Year. Having existed in many societies in different forms for generations, volunteerism appears to have come of age. The principal aim of the International Year of Volunteers — to instil lasting improvements to voluntary actions — was, therefore, a key and significant objective.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The observance of the International Year of Volunteers has succeeded in providing a welcome impetus to volunteerism. This has been done through the institution of awards and special studies programmes in schools and institutions; publication of books, manuals and surveys; undertaking of research; and enactment and improvement of legislation relating to volunteerism. The association and patronage of volunteerism by a large number of dignitaries and eminent personalities has also provided a significant boost to the achievement of objectives and the realization of targets of the International Year of Volunteers. This has all contributed to making the International Year of Volunteers a remarkably memorable one.

We agree with the assertion in the Secretary-General's report that a major outcome of the Year has been the collective recognition by Governments of the role and contribution of voluntary action and of the need to adopt strategic approaches to enhancing the environment for such actions to flourish. We consider volunteerism to be one of the important tools for addressing the problem of exclusion. Volunteerism provides a vehicle for empowering population groups under exclusion to gain access to opportunities. Amartya Sen stresses the need, given the adaptability of the language of exclusion, to adjust the rhetoric of exclusion to cover "unfavourable inclusion" as well. He speaks thus of "exclusion from equitable inclusion." As the Secretary-General observes, volunteering empowers people; it contributes to building solidarity, encourages participation and ownership, creates networks of reciprocity and reinforces a sense of collective responsibility.

The richness of India's culture and heritage has produced many a noble tradition. It will not, therefore,

be a surprise to this Assembly that volunteerism has formed an integral part of the Indian ethos known as *shramdaan*, or "donation of labour", in Indian society. In the years after India's independence, this social wealth was harnessed towards national development through the National Service Scheme. That scheme was introduced in 1969 with the aim of involving students on a voluntary and part-time basis which, while contributing to socio-economic development, would also stimulate social consciousness among the nation's youth. The success of this project led to the launching of the National Service Volunteer Scheme in 1977-1978, which envisaged participation in voluntary work on a full-time basis. A National Service volunteer would participate actively in the development process of the nation through service to the community. This was subsequently supplemented with another programme for non-student rural youth volunteers.

Like many other nations, India too participated actively in the observance of the International Year of Volunteers and worked for its success, through the organization of a number of programmes, including conferences, workshops and youth camps, which enjoyed wide participation. India views volunteerism as a continuous and contributory process on the path of the nation's development. The country's highest developmental planning body, the Planning Commission, has been designated as the nodal agency for the voluntary sector in the country.

My delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/57/L.8, on follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers. We would like to thank the main sponsor, Brazil, for its effort in presenting the draft resolution. The draft resolution aims to ensure that the impetus provided to volunteerism during the International Year of Volunteers is sustained in the future. Our sponsorship of this draft resolution is a manifestation of our support for the noble work of the community of volunteers worldwide.

Mr. Biybosunov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation welcomed with enthusiasm the General Assembly's proclamation of the International Year of Volunteers, whose lofty goal is to promote and ensure cooperation in order to enhance people's lives.

We believe that the Secretary-General's report and the provisions of draft resolution A/57/L.8, which was submitted today by the delegation of Brazil, reflect the principal undertakings and events held in the context of the International Year of Volunteers.

We attach particular importance to the efforts made at the national level. In this connection, allow me to highlight the decision of the Government of Kyrgyzstan to create a national coordinating council charged with monitoring the process of the promulgation of the first law on volunteer activities.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan, jointly with international organizations, is continuing to work I intensively within the framework of the General Assembly resolution on the International Year of Volunteers. A number of projects have been implemented, aimed, inter alia, at alleviating the plight of refugees. These include integration into Kyrgyzstan, voluntary repatriation, legal protection, conflict prevention and emergency planning. The outcome of the Year and the implementation of the projects undertaken have shed light on ways and means of developing the potential of volunteerism.

In this context, the Government of Kyrgyzstan has undertaken, as a priority task, informational and promotional campaigns as well as efforts at the local level to involve citizens in volunteer activities, with a view to enabling non-governmental and other organizations effectively to tap the tremendous potential of volunteers.

We are convinced that the need for volunteer activities is greater than ever, given global problems such as environmental deterioration, poverty, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, all of which disproportionately affect the most vulnerable segments of society. We note also the trend towards the development of the activities of civil society.

We believe that cooperation among Governments and the private sector will further promote the development of volunteerism. We are convinced also that the Year, which is designed to increase recognition for, interaction with, and assistance and support to volunteers, can make a real contribution to raising awareness as to the achievements and future potential of volunteers. Proposals can also be made with a view to encouraging an ever-greater number of people to become involved and to ensuring the availability of the resources necessary to enhancing the effectiveness of volunteerism.

We believe also that it is important to focus, at the level of local and international organizations, on the importance of the volunteer movement and on its potential to contribute to the resolution of society's problems. First and foremost, new organizations should be created that are charged with promoting volunteer movements and with creating conditions conducive to cooperation, in order to develop volunteer services at the local level.

In Kyrgyzstan, for over two years now, a volunteer initiatives centre has been working to develop the volunteer movement. In the past year, that centre has witnessed increased interest on the part of organizations in involving volunteers in their activities. In this connection, a decision was taken to draft uniform standards on volunteer work. Such standards will be part of a universal system to recruit volunteers into various organizations and to coordinate, monitor and assess their work.

I hope that the aforementioned draft, which will become the main regulatory document for volunteers and organizations in Kyrgyzstan, will make it possible to organize our work more professionally and enable us to share our experiences in developing this area.

Mr. Laurin (Canada): There was a time when volunteering was seen as an activity to usefully fill the time of the recently retired, to earn extra credits for high-school students, or as a temporary response to emergencies. Useful, certainly, but of marginal social impact and economic significance.

Any lingering support for this point of view should have been entirely dispelled by the Secretary-General's comprehensive report. The report demonstrates the enormous contribution made by volunteers, not only in response to emergencies but on an ongoing basis. Governments and societies around the world, in both developed and developing countries, depend on the volunteer sector in a number of ways: first, for their dedication and capacity to react quickly in response to new challenges; secondly, for their expertise and detailed knowledge of the situation on the ground; and thirdly, for their capacity as advocates for those who need assistance and as constructive critics of Government policy.

Of equal or greater significance than its economic impact is the social impact of volunteering, both at the macro level and at the level of relationships between individuals. Volunteering is of benefit both to those who receive assistance and to those who provide it. In many cases, there is no clear distinction between the two. Volunteering, at its best, is the act of fully participating in the development of one's own society. We encourage all Governments to tap into this immense potential, seeking guidance in this regard from the "Recommendations on support for volunteering" annexed to the resolution we adopted last year.

I salute the valuable work of United Nations Volunteers, under the leadership of its Executive Coordinator, Sharon Capeling-Alakija. Canada was pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the success of the United Nations Volunteers' launch of a global web site for the International Year of Volunteers, which has provided crucial support in assisting volunteer groups in the formation of national, regional and international networks. These networks play a useful role in enhancing coordination and in encouraging volunteer groups to share and build expertise.

I also commend the efforts of Brazil to enhance the profile of the International Year of Volunteers and related follow-up activities. Canada was pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution submitted by the delegation of Brazil on this subject.

Canada has a strong tradition of volunteering, as evidenced by our large voluntary sector, which consists of an estimated 180,000 non-profit organizations — of which 80,000 are registered as charities — and hundreds of thousands more volunteer groups that are not incorporated. In 2000, 6.5 million Canadians volunteered their time to a voluntary sector organization, and the sector employed a further 1.3 million people. This diverse multitude of organizations ranges from small community-based groups to large, national umbrella organizations and includes such organizations as neighbourhood associations, service clubs, advocacy coalitions, food banks, shelters, transition houses, symphonies and local sports clubs.

Events that were held throughout the year across Canada included the Global Youth Service Day, the National Volunteer Week, the National Youth Summit, the Canadian Forum on Volunteerism, the release of the results of the second Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, the CIVICUS 2001 World Assembly and the International Conference on Volunteer Administration. All of these contributed to

making 2001 an unequalled success and to increasing the role and definition of volunteers domestically.

(*spoke in French*)

On 5 December 2001, as the Year drew to a close, Prime Minister Chrétien announced the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI) as a legacy of the International Year of Volunteers. With funding of $43 million over five years, the initiative marks the Government's continued commitment to encouraging and promoting volunteerism and supporting the voluntary sector in Canada. The CVI has three main goals: to encourage Canadians to participate in voluntarism; to improve the capacity of organizations to benefit from the contribution of volunteers; and to enhance the experience of volunteering.

Also on 5 December 2001, the Prime Minister signed a landmark accord between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector — a blueprint to guide the relationship between the federal Government and the voluntary sector.

Canada is also committed to funding for an enhanced Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, as well as for the Satellite Account of Non-Profit Institutions and Volunteering. In October 2002, the Government announced the appointment of a Minister responsible for the voluntary sector. The role of the Minister is to ensure that the Government's commitments under the accord are fulfilled.

Before concluding my statement by paying tribute to the essential contributions of volunteers to the development of their societies, I am pleased to announce that on 5 December, the sculpture presented by Canada to the United Nations to mark the end of the International Year of Volunteers will be unveiled at the headquarters of the United Nations Volunteers in Bonn.

Mrs. Grollová (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic fully associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by Denmark on behalf of the European Union (EU). Like those of the EU countries, the competent bodies in the Czech Republic paid great attention to the International Year of Volunteers, proclaimed by the United Nations in 2001. Our aim was to increase the awareness of the general public of the ideas and objectives of volunteerism. To this end, a National Coordinating Committee for the International Year was set up in the Czech Republic to focus on the following three priorities: the promotion and presentation of the Year in the Czech Republic; support for incorporating the term "volunteerism" in Czech legislation; and the promotion of particular voluntary projects.

Working groups were set up for each of those fields, composed of members of the National Coordinating Committee and other invited experts. Throughout 2001, all the priority tasks were gradually carried out. Several international conferences were also organized in the Czech Republic during 2001, during which contacts with foreign partners and exchanges of experience proved to be most helpful for the Czech public and voluntary organizations and, we hope, for their foreign partners as well.

The promotional element is an important aspect of the process without which no voluntary programme could develop effectively. Voluntary actions were announced in a number of daily newspapers and magazines and on the radio and television during the International Year. Views on particular projects were presented in the mass media by representatives of non-profit organizations involved in voluntary activities, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. The opening of an Internet volunteers portal is also worthy of mention. That database of available volunteers and programmes was inaugurated during the Year.

Public presentations and media campaigns in support of voluntary activities remain one of the main means by which the Czech Government further disseminates information about the potential of volunteerism in modern society, thus rehabilitating the idea of volunteerism, which was greatly devalued in our country under the communist regime.

Volunteerism is a phenomenon that is very sensitive to institutionalization. Goodwill or the need to be of help leads to a volunteer's decision to commit his or her own efforts and time to others. Such a decision can only be made voluntarily. However, because of the need to ensure the voluntary nature of such actions and an appropriate level of responsibility on the part of all involved, we also recognized the need for an adequate legislative framework for such activities. To this end, during the International Year of Volunteers the Czech Republic decided to pass an act on voluntary service. That legal instrument was initiated by the Czech Government in close cooperation with civil society, and based on a earlier analysis of field practice and the operative Czech legislation

relating to voluntary service. The aim of the act was not to regulate or limit existing, considerably varied forms of voluntary service and activities, but to clearly define their operational mode and the conditions under which the Government could promote them.

Although the International Year proved very fruitful, one year is not enough to exert sufficient influence on the attitude of nations towards volunteerism. The Czech Government has therefore also paid due attention to the follow-up of the Year. The Act on Voluntary Service was approved by parliament in April 2002 and will enter into force on 1 January 2003, thus creating basic legal conditions for further dynamic developments in this field. The State administration bodies are currently preparing suitable mechanisms for granting accreditation to volunteers' organizations, on the basis of which such non-profit organizations can obtain governmental subsidies in support of their activities.

In the context of the International Year of Volunteers, the Czech Government also earmarked funds for support to voluntary programmes and projects. At the recommendation of the National Coordinating Committee, those funds were divided up in the form of a special subsidy among the 23 best-evaluated Czech volunteer organizations operating in the Czech Republic. In addition to making an annual contribution to the United Nations Volunteers Special Voluntary Fund, the Czech Government has highlighted its interest in cooperating with the United Nations Volunteers by signing, at the end of 2001, a full funding agreement. This arrangement will enable the Government to fully fund, through the United Nations Volunteers, the engagement of an increasing number of Czech volunteers in various United Nations projects and programmes abroad.

The Government of the Czech Republic appreciates the report of the Secretary-General on the International Year of Volunteers: outcomes and future perspectives, and reaffirms its readiness to participate actively in future United Nations activities in the area of the development of volunteering and of volunteering in development.

In conclusion, I should like, from this lofty rostrum, to thank, on behalf of the Government of the Czech Republic, the Czech volunteers who, during the damaging floods last summer, proved what an irreplaceable role they play in our society, as well as all volunteers worldwide for their courage, unselfishness, solidarity and humanity.

Ms. Garcia (Philippines): I am honoured to speak before the Assembly on this important agenda item dealing with social development. Since it is my first time addressing this body, allow me to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Today we pay tribute to all volunteers of the world for their contribution to the socio-economic and cultural causes of nations. The report of the Secretary-General, document A/57/352, lists the priceless work that they have done for society. We must therefore continue to ensure that this initiative will continue to bear fruit in the future.

During the World Summit for Social Development, in 1995, we committed ourselves to alleviating poverty, promoting full employment and securing social integration. We renewed that commitment in Geneva five years later and committed ourselves to increasing the mobilization of resources to meet those goals.

We recognize that, after the proclamation of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers, the work of volunteers towards meeting social and economic development agendas of nations has increased. The Millennium Declaration builds on that effort by encouraging citizens to contribute towards its goals.

My delegation sees volunteerism as a vehicle by which vulnerable groups and those who are marginalized, including youth, older persons, disabled people, families and other social groups, can be part of a country's socio-economic and cultural endeavour. Volunteers are an untapped resource of a country. Once harnessed, their work is estimated to be 8 to 12 per cent of a nation's total gross domestic product. Their role in society has been recognized by the international community, and we commend the United Nations for launching the work of the United Nations Volunteers programme in 130 countries.

Volunteerism provides an opportunity to reinforce the means and capabilities of people from different levels of society to engage in activities that are self-beneficial, as well as beneficial to their respective communities and to the nation.

My delegation deems it important that youth be given a chance to acquire technical and life skills

through volunteering. Creating opportunities for young people to influence development processes enables them to make their invaluable contribution to the country's socio-economic goals. The initiative and energy of young people can be harnessed to more productive endeavours that will benefit society as a whole, including in the fight against poverty.

According to a study of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), poverty and social fragmentation are the main causes of illicit drug use. It was observed that drug use is high in cities where individuals are separated from their communities. Thus, nations must stress to its youth the social benefits of volunteer action among its youth to counteract the negative effects of the vicious circle of drug abuse and poverty.

It is our view that, through volunteer work, older persons are given the opportunity to continue to contribute to society without having to deal with the structure of a workplace. The recently adopted Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing recognizes that older persons can make valuable contributions through voluntary activities. The Philippines also supports the Macau Declaration on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, which emphasizes the contributions that older persons are making and can still make to society. It stresses the positive role of older persons and that those persons can continue to have a productive and meaningful role in the community through volunteer work.

My delegation believes that, through volunteerism, the poor can be part of the solution in the fight against poverty. Involving the poor in decision-making processes that will affect their lives makes them more accountable for their actions.

In my country, volunteers are involved in various phases of policy-making. During the planning phase, they are part of the preparation of the Philippine medium-term development plan, through regional consultations among various sectors of society. In the implementation phase, volunteers in the Philippines are given the opportunity to choose the programmes that are available to them through what we call the volunteer desks. These desks also serve to recruit volunteers on a regular basis. To give further impetus to the role of volunteers, the Philippine House of Representatives recently adopted a resolution that supports further consultations on volunteerism.

The challenge that the international community must meet today is to build on the momentum of the International Year of Volunteers so that we can continue to energize youth, the ageing population and other vulnerable sectors in society through volunteerism. The private sector, particularly the media, must work closely with civil society and Government to seek programmes and processes that harness volunteer work in meeting society's socio-economic goals. More innovative ways must be developed to increase opportunities for volunteers and to mobilize them to implement the recommendations made by international conferences and summits.

Let us, as members of the international community, make a firm commitment to ensure a conducive environment for voluntary action to prosper in our world.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): The promotion of social development and a better standard of life are among the fundamental objectives of every society. While primary responsibility for attaining social development rests with the Governments concerned, an inclusive endeavour by all segments of society towards that end cannot be overemphasized. It is against this backdrop that factoring volunteerism into policy formulation and the implementation of plans attains greater relevance.

The role of volunteers was formally acknowledged by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, at which it recommended the promotion of volunteering in social development. It encouraged Governments to develop comprehensive strategies and programmes by raising public awareness about the value and opportunities of volunteerism. Governments were to facilitate the creation of enabling environments for voluntary activities, and the private sector was to support such activities. Volunteerism has also remained at centre stage of United Nations activities as a valuable, cross-cutting phenomenon.

The year 2001 was celebrated as the International Year of Volunteers. That helped to enhance recognition of the importance of volunteerism in addressing socio-economic needs. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/57/352. We compliment him on his vision of volunteerism and its possible role in realizing a just and equitable world. It is gratifying that volunteerism has been assigned a greater role in the development efforts of several Member States. We also appreciate

the valuable contribution made by United Nations Volunteers and its Executive Coordinator in encouraging articulation of the four goals of the Year: enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism by Government and civil society actors.

The genesis of volunteerism in Pakistan can be traced to the Pakistan movement. In the 1940s, during the struggle of Muslims in British India for a separate homeland, Pakistan entered its final and most crucial phase. Thousands of Muslim student volunteers transformed themselves into a network of political activists spreading the message of their leader, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, across the South Asian subcontinent. Again, soon after Pakistan's coming into existence, thousands of volunteers assisted the nascent administration of Pakistan in the rehabilitation of millions of refugees who had crossed over from India. Ever since then, volunteerism has been an integral part of Pakistan's socio-economic development.

Today Pakistan is evolving a new approach to development. Traditional resources are not sufficient to meet human development needs in Pakistan. Alternative sources of financing and human resources are essential to facilitate development. We are conscious that volunteerism can play a key role in supporting human development endeavours in Pakistan. Accordingly, the Government has taken a number of initiatives. The National Commission for Human Development, which was formed in June of last year, will function as a body instrumental for both public and private human development efforts and will have a presence in every district in Pakistan. It is the first initiative of its kind in our country.

In line with the United Nations International Year of Volunteers, the National Commission has created a national volunteer corps as a part of its broader agenda. It draws on the skills and motivation of volunteers at the grass-roots level to help meet development objectives in education, health and poverty alleviation. Pakistan has also become the first country to set up a human development fund in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to achieve poverty alleviation and human development. We appreciate the continued interest of UNDP in that endeavour. Pakistan is also the first country to establish a public-private partnership for human development following last year's Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development.

We are committed to tapping the spirit of volunteerism and the potential of our people in an organized manner. We will leverage global resources and involve all tiers of society to bring about effective transformation. Initially, the goal of the national volunteer corps during its first three years was to mobilize 100,000 volunteers. But the interest of the people and their eagerness to be part of the process might take the figure beyond 500,000. That will involve large-scale mobilization of local people and expatriates. The corps will also recruit Pakistani volunteers abroad through an on-line volunteering service. The National Commission is also developing a system to match volunteer skill sets with the operational needs of the organization in order to support its programmes.

We in Pakistan are committed to continuing to actively build on that momentum in our communities and to making them the key drivers of success. We consider volunteerism as a bridge to bring various segments of society closer to the common goal of human development.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of Brazil in introducing the draft resolution on this subject (A/57/L.8), which Pakistan has been happy to sponsor.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now give the floor to the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Katevas de Sclabos (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (*spoke in Spanish*): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is taking the floor this year to address the subject of volunteers and volunteerism. We will also address some of our basic concerns with regard to the special vulnerability of ageing populations, disabled persons and families. We will also speak about the contribution that young people can make, and are making, through their participation in volunteer networks all around the world.

A year has passed since the end of the International Year of Volunteers. In our view, the International Year of Volunteers was a resounding success. That success was due not so much to what has taken place in the field — much remains to be done

there — but, rather, to the renewed commitment demonstrated in various areas. The International Federation has also noted that many other regional, national and international non-profit organizations received a boost from the International Year of Volunteers and renewed their own commitment to it. In our statement to the General Assembly a year ago, at the time of the conclusion of the International Year of Volunteers, we anticipated that there would be an increase in joint activities with other organizations sharing that renewed commitment. I have the honour today to state that we are almost in a position to announce the birth of a new and interesting partnership that will make it possible to mobilize intense and sustained attention to issues that will be decisive for the future of volunteerism at the beginning of the new millennium.

In our statement last year we also mentioned our work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). On many occasions we have also spoken about the fruitful and stimulating relationship we have with the United Nations Volunteers programme. The International Forum of Business Leaders is another organization with which we have established a close and productive relationship in the context of volunteerism. Along with the International Federation, those organizations make up a huge alliance of innovative leaders, individuals and organizations that has a real and ongoing need for the constant involvement of volunteers. We intend to take advantage of every possible opportunity to join our efforts in order to achieve the objectives that prompted the United Nations to declare the year 2001 the International Year of Volunteers.

It is the hope of the International Federation that this partnership may become a reality very soon. When that happens, it will be possible for the new hopes about the future of volunteerism to bear fruit. Civil society, businesses, legislators from all countries and the international community itself will be working together to eliminate all the obstacles that stand in the way of the expansion of volunteerism and to seek ways and means of inculcating the spirit of volunteerism at the local, national, regional and global levels.

There are many millions of non-profit volunteer organizations all around the world. Although the International Federation and its member societies — the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies — represent the largest network in the world, it is important to pay tribute to all those people, including elderly people, children, women and men, who selflessly lend their assistance to the benefit of the communities in which they live.

Unfortunately, there is no doubt that the pressures brought to bear on families and individuals in the contemporary world and its economies have made it much more difficult for people to offer their time with the same generosity as they have in the past. At the same time, there is a disturbingly large number of Governments that do not appear to have recognized the importance of volunteers for the well-being of their own communities.

We shall not dwell on the contributions made by volunteers at any great length, because they are well known. However, some examples will undoubtedly help us lay the bases for the action that we wish Governments to undertake. In the Syrian Arab Republic, national Red Crescent Society volunteers played a crucial role in the planning and delivery of assistance to persons affected by the collapse of the Zeyoun dam at the beginning of June this year. Volunteers reached the disaster site within a few hours and immediately provided extremely necessary material and human assistance to the villages. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society and its volunteers play a very clear-cut function in all the disaster preparedness work in that country.

In my country, Chile, the national Red Cross Society has 21,780 volunteers, of whom 14,456 are young people. Those volunteers, and those of many other organizations, have traditionally played a key role in intervention activities in emergencies and disasters. The Chilean Red Cross Society responds whenever its assistance is requested, working closely with the Government and other associated organizations. In fact, at the same time that the Zeyoun dam disaster was taking place in Syria, more than 2,500 volunteers from 189 Chilean Red Cross chapters were providing relief and assistance to approximately 12,000 victims of heavy flooding. Those are good examples of the constant need to be able to rely on well-prepared volunteers to work together with Government agencies and with other non-profit voluntary organizations.

Around the world, the national societies members of the International Federation mobilize volunteers in the fight against HIV/AIDS and in support of anti-stigmatization campaigns, which are regarded by all

those working in that field as absolutely crucial in tackling the challenge of that terrible pandemic.

We are not asking Governments to create volunteers. They cannot do that. However, Governments can, without realizing it, create conditions that make it difficult for communities to set up their own volunteer networks. There are many countries, even in the developed world, where Governments have not realized that volunteerism is a delicate concept and is subject to challenges. It needs a favourable environment in order to flourish and continue to yield the tremendous benefits of quality volunteer service in the community. We urge Governments, and perhaps most usefully with the support of their own legislators, business leaders and volunteer organizations such as the national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies, to embark on a systematic review of the current context in which volunteerism is developing in their countries. We urge Governments to include in that review all the aspects of the laws and regulations that may have an impact on the development and growth of volunteerism, including in particular tax laws, the right to employment, competition regulation, legal protection of volunteers and laws that promote training.

The International Federation tackles this issue in a very serious way. The next occasion on which all our national societies will be able to review this issue directly with their Governments, in order to address all the aspects that I have just mentioned, will be in December 2003 at the next International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. In connection with one of the agenda items of that conference, Governments and national societies — the participants in the international conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement — will be studying ways in which the commitments undertaken at the last International Conference, held in December 1999, have been put into effect. Several of those commitments related to volunteerism. In Final Goal 3.3 of the International Plan of Action adopted at the Conference, States declared that they would review legislation and, when appropriate, enact norms and update them with a view to facilitating the effective work of the relevant volunteer organizations.

That commitment is still the central element of today's message, a year after the International Year of Volunteers. It is the central element of the work that we shall be carrying out together with our partners. It is also the main message that the International Federation, together with our colleagues and with the United Nations Volunteers programme, have just communicated to the seventeenth World Volunteer Conference, organized by the International Association for Volunteer Effort in Seoul from 11 to 15 November 2002.

Much is being done today in this field. That is why we urge our Governments to join this endeavour and embrace our resolve to create a favourable environment for volunteerism in all countries all around the world.

The Acting President: I have been informed that the Spanish version of today's *Journal* mistakenly indicated that this item was going to be considered this afternoon, instead of this morning. As a result, as is clear from what I see in the Hall, almost all of the Spanish-speaking delegations, with perhaps a few exceptions, are absent. Most of them were also among the original sponsors of the draft resolution. Under the circumstances, the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/57/L.8 this afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.61

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

61st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 November 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 98 (*continued*)

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family: Outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its follow-up

Draft resolution (A/57/L.8)

The Acting President: The Assembly shall now consider draft resolution A/57/L.8. I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Indonesia, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius and Niger.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.8, entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.8?

Draft resolution A/57/L.8 was adopted (resolution 57/106).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 98.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

02-71330 (E)

United Nations A/57/PV.62

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

62nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 27 November 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/57/3 (Parts I and II))

The President: I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to introduce the 2002 report of the Economic and Social Council.

This year has been a very important year for the Council — one in which it has helped to advance the international development agenda and has undertaken new challenging tasks. I shall briefly highlight some of the key outcomes of the Council's session and then address the issues of conference follow-up, peace-building and conflict prevention as well as cooperation among the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Let us start with an overview of certain segments of the 2002 session of the Economic and Social Council. The Council's high-level segment was devoted to human resources development, in particular health and education. It gave concrete content to the policies and means required to implement the Millennium Development Goals in those areas. The segment adopted a Ministerial Declaration stressing that health and education are central to sustainable development and poverty eradication and that they should be core concerns of macroeconomic and other policies. The Declaration makes a strong call for the provision of more resources for education and health, in particular for HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It gave new impetus to Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to work towards better health and education for all. A number of ministers of health or education and heads of United Nations system agencies took part in the meeting. A particular feature this year was civil society's extensive participation in the segment and in the preparations for it, notably through the NGO Forum. The Declaration makes a specific reference to the contribution of civil society.

In the debate during the operational activities segment, the main focus was on funding for the development work of the funds and programmes and on harmonizing and simplifying their procedures. The Council focused also on evaluating the effectiveness of the development work of the United Nations system. Many delegations expressed interest in building the segment further as a global forum for providing overall policy guidance for United Nations system operational activities for development. The resolution adopted by the Council mandated key themes to guide and reorient the operational activities of the United Nations system over the short and medium terms.

The Council's coordination segment focused on how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and the impact and effectiveness of its work. The segment adopted agreed conclusions that create a solid

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foundation for strengthening the Council's contribution to integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. The agreed conclusions also contain a number of important elements that are supportive of the reform agenda currently being developed for the General Assembly.

During the humanitarian affairs segment, the Council provided guidance for reinforcing the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system and of other bodies. It also stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from relief to development. The resolution placed a special focus on providing assistance to vulnerable groups.

In its general segment, the Council focused on guiding the work of its subsidiary bodies, on strengthening their functioning and on enhancing the complementarities among them. That Council role is becoming all the more important as we proceed to implement the goals set out at Monterrey, at Johannesburg and at earlier United Nations meetings in a cohesive and effective way. This year, for the first time, a meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council with the Chairpersons of the functional commissions was organized, followed by a panel discussion with members of the Council. That meeting provided an important forum for coordination and cooperation among the functional commissions as well as with the Economic and Social Council, and it contributed to strengthening the relationship between the Council and its commissions. The Council also looked at the report of its newly established Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. It established a support secretariat for the Forum within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. That will be important in helping the Council to guide and coordinate the work of the United Nations system and to raise awareness of indigenous issues.

I now turn to follow-up on United Nations conferences and summits. The Council met between the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. Thus, a key concern that ran throughout its session was follow-up on the commitments made at those conferences, at the Millennium Summit and at other conferences and summits. As we move into the phase of implementation of the complex and interrelated goals established at those events, it is essential that the United Nations show that it can provide practical orientation with regard to issues that are of the utmost concern. That is even more important at a time when an uncertain economic situation and a rapid globalization process are posing great challenges. The 2002 session of the Economic and Social Council demonstrated that the Council had the ability to do so.

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to helping the General Assembly to further the goals established at the Millennium Summit and at other major conferences, including those held at Monterrey and Johannesburg. In many ways, its work helped to advance the practical follow-up on those commitments. The promotion of integrated responses to major United Nations conferences and summits is an area where the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should be working closely together. The Council has pursued consistent efforts to promote integrated follow-up of conferences and to identify how best to conduct conference reviews. In 2002, it stressed the importance of fully using existing United Nations bodies for conference reviews. Many delegations in the General Assembly have supported the establishment of an open-ended ad hoc working group, under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly, to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, also taking into account the ongoing discussion of the overall reform process.

Policy guidance from the Assembly will assist the Council in its task of promoting coherence in the implementation of conference goals, which is an important means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, the Council carries out that task by addressing cross-cutting conference themes and by guiding the work of its commissions and of the United Nations system on conference follow-up. It thus contributes to the development of a holistic and comprehensive approach in the development agenda emerging from recent conferences.

The Council's July session adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the Monterrey Conference. That resolution places particular emphasis on the Council's role in ensuring coherent implementation of the Monterrey Consensus by United Nations economic and social entities and by the system as a whole. The Council is determined to effectively carry out the central role assigned to it in the Monterrey follow-up process. It is currently reflecting on how best to discharge that mandate through its joint meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions.

At this year's spring high-level meeting, the Council reflected on how this could be done. For the first time, the World Trade Organization was actively engaged in that meeting, together with the Bretton Woods institutions and other stakeholders of the Monterrey process. For next year, we are currently thinking of extending the meeting to a full day. Forums with non-governmental organizations and the private sector could be held prior to the meeting.

Peace-building and conflict prevention is another area where we need to mobilize our efforts to achieve the Goals of the Millennium Declaration. In response to a request by the General Assembly, the Council agreed to establish, during its 2002 substantive session, an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict. The Group will aim to examine humanitarian and economic needs; to review relevant programmes of support; to prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support that integrates relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in a comprehensive approach; and to provide advice on ensuring the adequacy and coherence of international assistance. This is a concrete step taken by the Council to strengthen its contribution to an integrated approach to peace-building and development.

Guinea-Bissau was the first country to request that such an advisory group be formed. I would like to stress that the criteria for the composition of the Group were not based on regional representation but on the need to have a small and efficient representation of countries that can contribute the most to addressing the situation in Guinea-Bissau. On 25 October 2002, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau was established by the Economic and Social Council. It has already visited Guinea-Bissau, and it will submit to the Council a report on its recommendations by mid-January 2003. In performing its task, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau will closely cooperate with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

The year 2002 was indeed marked by increased interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. I addressed the Security Council four times. Most recently, in October, I had the opportunity to speak at the public meeting of the Security Council on cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region and at its public meeting on women, peace and security. As well, the President of the Security Council addressed the Economic and Social Council, for example, on the recent commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Mozambique. We intend to continue that interactive exchange in the future, as we are increasingly aware of the close linkages among peace, security — including terrorism — and issues of economic and social development.

With respect to cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, in addition to conference follow-up and the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict, many other outcomes of the Council are of key relevance to the work of the General Assembly, such as those on human rights, social development and gender mainstreaming, to mention only a few.

A more substantive and interactive relationship is developing between the Assembly and the Council. That relationship should help in providing practical orientation to the international community in the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. In that regard, it will be important to maximize synergies between the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee.

The process of reforming the Economic and Social Council, in follow-up to the coordination segment of this year's session, is continuing under the leadership of the Bureau. The work of the Council could still be made more efficient. One important condition in that regard is that a decision be taken as early as possible on the themes for the Council's high-level and coordination segments to allow sufficient time for their preparation, including the organization of round tables and panels. Another area in which the Council needs to further improve its work is its relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions. This is crucial for the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as for the Council, as a more efficient relationship among them can be the basis for broader-based and more inclusive global economic decision-making.

Still, we should recognize that the Council has improved its work tremendously in recent years. It is certainly not — if it ever was — a ceremonial body. It is a body that is active throughout the year through its round tables, panel discussions and the recently

established Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict.

The substantive session of the Economic and Social Council showed us that it is possible, given the political will of its membership, to strengthen the Council's role and the efficiency of its work. During the current session of the General Assembly, there is a sense of expectation that overall work on strengthening the Organization will receive new energy and impetus. The Economic and Social Council, for its part, will be actively supporting that process within its area of competence.

Mr. Saleh (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me first thank Ambassador Šimonović, President of the Economic and Social Council, for his thorough presentation of the Council's report (A/57/3). I would also like to thank Ambassador Šimonović for his reform efforts during his presidency of the Council over the past year.

The Economic and Social Council is of crucial importance, because it is one of the principal organs of the United Nations. It is a central intergovernmental body tasked under Article 62 of the Charter with ensuring coordination within the United Nations system and with presenting studies and recommendations on economic, social, cultural, educational and health issues. Given the importance of those issues and the important role the Council has assumed in recent years, there is a more pressing need to reform and reinvigorate the Council. While some progress has been made, much remains to be done. Reform is necessary, if the Council is to take up economic and social questions at the international level in a serious fashion. However, efforts are being made to strengthen the Council to make it more effective in dealing with the questions within its competence.

In that context, I shall mention some developments over the past year that have strengthened the Council's role. First, during the substantive session of 2002, the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council held a joint meeting with the bureaux of the functional commissions reporting to the Council. The goal was, for the first time, to strengthen coordination among the functional commission, which deal with distinct but interrelated questions. That led to a meeting between the chairpersons of the functional commissions and members of the Council, similar to the annual meeting with the heads of the regional economic commissions during the substantive session. These meetings help strengthen coordination between the various technical committees of the Economic and Social Council in order to avoid duplication. Secondly, during the present General Assembly session there have been a number of joint meetings held between the First and Second Committees to strengthen coordination between them and the Economic and Social Council, and to prevent duplication. Both Committees serve as liaison between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Thirdly, during the second week of July 2002 there was a coordination meeting, the first of its kind between the presiding officers of the major United Nations bodies: the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We concur with the idea of this type of meetings that can only strengthen the effectiveness of the major United Nations bodies and provide for better coordination of their actions in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and the report of the Secretary-General entitled, "An agenda for further change".

Fourthly, cooperation and coordination between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council has become stronger than before. In fact, the President of the Economic and Social Council, upon the invitation of the President of the Security Council, participated in the public meeting on Africa held by the Security Council on 29 January 2002 under the Mauritian presidency. It was the first time that the President of the Economic and Social Council officially attended a meeting of the Security Council. It paved the way for other meetings of this type.

At the request of the President of the Security Council, on 22 May 2002, the President of the Economic and Social Council participated in the Ad hoc Working Group on Africa of the Security Council. The President of the Security Council also participated in the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2002 at the invitation of the President of ECOSOC. This cooperative linkage between the two Councils is similar to the inextricable linkage between peace and development. They complement each other.

Fifthly, the 2002 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council witnessed the establishment of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African countries emerging from conflict. This is a true

achievement of the Council. Such an advisory group will strengthen the role of the Council in post-conflict peace-building. It will lead to rehabilitation and reconstruction and prevent any resumption of hostilities. This Advisory Group will strengthen cooperation and coordination between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Any observer of the Economic and Social Council activities will necessarily note the cooperation between the members, the Secretariat and interested third parties for reforming the Council and its working methods and for increasing its efficiency. In his report entitled "Strengthening the Economic and Social Council", the Secretary-General stressed this requirement and mentioned the role of the Council in coordinating the implementation of the recommendations of international conferences and the Millennium Declaration in cooperation and coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system. This is in addition to the challenges facing the Council at the present time, such as globalization, which necessitates the development of policies and the adoption of resolutions to find more integrated approaches for achieving peace and development.

The Council, over the past two years, has given a great deal of attention to human development, particularly in Africa, through the convening of high-level meetings of the Council to discuss this issue. This is encouraging because this continent deserves great attention from the United Nations to help it overcome its burdensome crises.

Finally, we hope that the role of the Economic and Social Council will be strengthened in the future so that it can better tackle the challenges of our times and the ever-changing international developments. For this, it will be necessary to join our efforts to strengthen the activities of this important body and its various committees. This is why there must be more cooperation between members of the Council, the Presidency of the Council, the Secretariat, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. This is in addition to the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which will help the Council to fulfil its mandate in the best possible manner.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the associated countries — Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Area country of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union continues to attach great importance to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. In this respect we find that this summer's substantive session yielded some productive discussions. The Council must, however, continue to revitalize itself in order to maintain its relevance and become increasingly meaningful.

The accomplishments of the substantive session included the ministerial debate and the declaration on human resources development. The European Union finds that the session resulted in relevant concrete proposals for policies and steps required to meet the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of health and education. We support the Council in its endeavours to build on the recent achievements of this summer's substantive session in order to increase its relevance and effectiveness. In doing so, we support a reinforced role for the Council in promoting an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. We urge the Council to continue to strengthen its collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization as indicated in the Monterrey Consensus. We look forward to finalizing concrete proposals to enhance the operational usefulness of the annual high-level dialogue between the institutions.

We attach importance to the Council's role in coordinating its subsidiary bodies and its complementary role with the General Assembly. We welcome the decisions to strengthen the effectiveness of the Council's work by agreeing on a number of concrete steps to streamline working methods and alleviate documentation problems.

The European Union is very pleased with the establishment of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African countries emerging from conflict. We sincerely hope that this mechanism will contribute toward filling the gap between relief efforts and long-term reconstruction and development.

Furthermore, we hope that the mechanism will provide an opportunity to enhance the coordination between the Economic and Social Council and the

Security Council in order to address the challenges of peace-building and to mobilize support for the needs of the African countries emerging from conflict.

The European Union welcomes the resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations adopted at the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council. The resolution gives clear guidance to all actors in the humanitarian field. In this regard, the EU welcomes the fact that increased attention to vulnerable groups was called for.

The support of the European Union for the work of the Economic and Social Council is well known. We must take advantage of this window of opportunity — the momentum for action and improvement created by the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit. What it will take is the political will and resolve to do so. It is our responsibility to ensure that the Economic and Social Council finally fulfils its potential in the economic and social field, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We look forward to the implementation of the next steps in this respect.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): A year ago, the General Assembly took a historic decision: to consider in plenary the report of the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly's intention was to strengthen the role of that organ, as called for in the Millennium Declaration, and to restore to international cooperation its full political dimension and its ability to contribute to the maintenance of peace. My country, Cameroon, had the honour of presiding over the Economic and Social Council at the time.

The presentation just made by the President of the Economic and Social Council, my colleague Ambassador Šimonović, shows how very insightful the General Assembly was at the time. I wish to pay tribute to the Assembly for its dynamism, its clarity of vision and for pursuing its quest for a spirit of consensus, a quality with which we all are familiar.

My delegation listened to that presentation with the greatest interest. It covered the work done by the Economic and Social Council in the past year, as well as, most importantly, directions to be taken in future. We are convinced that the recommendations of the President of the Council, as well as the extremely useful suggestions that he was kind enough to offer us, will find a place in future resolutions adopted in the context of a detailed consideration of the report of the Economic and Social Council.

The year 2002 was a milestone for the Economic and Social Council, as its President has just noted. In Monterrey and later in Johannesburg, our heads of State recognized the importance of that organ in the process of the mobilization of Governments, civil society and international organizations, within a renewed spirit of partnership for development and in particular for a more equitable and humane globalization.

An important role was granted to the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up to the conferences — a well-deserved tribute for its work to date. But this is first and foremost a challenge that all of us together, as Members of the United Nations, must face. The work of the Council this year shows that we are moving in the right direction, and the excellent presentation made earlier by the President of the Council is particularly meaningful in this regard.

The Ministerial declaration on health and education gives a direct impetus to efforts to achieve the Millennium Declaration goals and those of the other important summits. While calling for new initiatives and new partnerships, the declaration issues an urgent appeal for the mobilization of new resources for health and education.

The Economic and Social Council has also asserted its resolve to follow up on the Monterrey Conference. It has issued clear guidelines for preparations for its spring meeting with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods institutions. We invite the Economic and Social Council to initiate as soon as possible preparations for this extremely important meeting. We must together consider how this upcoming meeting can contribute to the implementation of the Monterrey objectives.

Let us engage our Bretton Woods partners while leaving the doors open to civil society. In this vein, we must reflect on what the Economic and Social Council can contribute to the success of the annual high-level debate in the General Assembly, in particular the one to be held next year on following up the Monterrey Summit.

The Economic and Social Council has also confirmed its capacity to mobilize United Nations

funds and programmes on the basis of clear-cut priorities. The participation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and of other regional organizations in operational activities augurs well for the Council's ability to strengthen international cooperation in the field of development.

The Economic and Social Council has clearly shown what an important part it can play in the debate on international development; However, this is not enough. The Council must adapt its methods of work to the challenges posed by the so-called new multilateralism, which was emphasized during the Millennium Summit and reaffirmed recently at Monterrey, Doha and Johannesburg.

Finally, allow me to say a few words about the development of Africa. This question has been at the core of the concerns of the Economic and Social Council for some years, for which we are grateful. In 2001, under the presidency of Cameroon, the Council was the first international body clearly to state its support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which had just been launched in Lusaka.

With the creation this year of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflicts, the Economic and Social Council has taken an important step to strengthen international cooperation precisely where it is most needed. Cameroon welcomes the creation of the first Ad Hoc Advisory Group, on Guinea-Bissau, and we await its report with great interest. Despite — indeed, because of — the difficult political situation in that country, we must do everything we can to help the people of Guinea-Bissau to find the way to peace and sustainable development once again.

Cameroon also welcomes the enhanced interaction between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In October 2002, the President of the Economic and Social Council was invited to attend two important Security Council meetings — the public meeting on women and peace and security and the meeting on strengthening the United Nations system with regard to conflict prevention and resolution in Central Africa. The dialogue that was thus initiated between the two Councils will improve the efficiency of United Nations action in favour of peace and development.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, one year ago Cameroon was presiding over the Economic and Social Council, and it was at our initiative that that Council's report came to be examined by the General Assembly in plenary meeting, and not only in the Second Committee. As we said earlier, this is not merely a procedural matter. It also provides a mechanism to enable the General Assembly to consider every aspect of the work of the Economic and Social Council and to draw on its views in forging economic and social policy and in formulating the development activities of the United Nations system.

We are pleased to note that today's debate has given us an opportunity to reflect in depth on the work of the Economic and Social Council and to develop new orientations with a view to enabling that organ to be what it must be: an indispensable element for the protection of international peace and security.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 12. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 12.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to remind members that, as was announced in today's Journal, the 5th meeting of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on United Nations reform will begin immediately upon the adjournment of this meeting, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.